セブンス 2nd.

illustration
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三嶋与夢

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ヒーロー文庫

Prologue

Having lost a duel with my sister, 【Celes】, and having been kicked out of my own House, I, 【Lyle Walt】, was sitting around a table with two women.

(I-I can't taste anything.)

While we ate a slightly-late dinner, I started to worry about just how we got into this situation.

By the heir of the Count's House, I was thrown out with nothing.

I lost everything, and so, I thought I would become an adventurer for the time being, and left my homeland.

My former fiancée,【Novem Forxuz】, had continued to follow me after I had lost my worth. She was the second daughter of a Baron House and an acquaintance from my childhood.

She was a well-put-together former fiancée, and also one I couldn't think of myself as on equal terms with.

It wasn't that she was scary, or evil, or anything.

She sold off all the furnishings she had prepared for her wedding to me and used the funds for my sake.

She even looked after me when I proved too oblivious to face the world.

She was kind, and yet, so beautiful.

Her bright-born hair was done in a side ponytail, and right now, she was quietly eating. The spoon touched her light pink lips.

Her violet eyes were locked on the food she made herself. Soup and bread, as well as some cheap grilled meat, was set atop the table.

"Lyle-sama, is it not to your taste?"

Perhaps noticing me staring at her, Novem directed a worried look.

“T-that isn’t the case!”

Saying that, I returned to my meal.

And I also looked at the woman sitting across from Novem.

Red hair that grew to her back, where the tips of it curled out of habit. Her violet eyes didn’t seem to be able to settle down, as they incessantly moved around.

【Aria Lockwarde】was a woman driven out of her home.

Of course, her reason was fundamentally different from mine.

It was because her father had connections to a bandit troupe. The bandits that drifted into Dalien made a stronghold in a nearby abandoned mine, and a few of them infiltrated the town.

The one who aided them in all of that was her father.

She was from what was once a Viscount House, and a notable family which held a managerial position in government.

This girl… Aria’s father was able to crush all that history in his single lifetime.

What was more, he even sold off the family heirlooms.

Having been tasked with subjugating those very bandits, I played the part of a foolish son driven out by his family and received funding from Dalien’s lord before venturing out to reclaim that heirloom.

“Ah, this is good.”

As Aria said that, Novem looked happy.

With a smile, she went into an explanation about the dish.

“I used sake when I tenderized the meat. I’m happy it is to your taste.”

Take it from me, by no means did I assist Aria because I had fallen for her.

That was definitely wrong.

There was also a deep reason as to why she was in my and Novem's house.

Aria's father, who sold a【Gem】that contained multiple Skills to the bandits, was currently in the feudal lord's custody.

And she was forced to vacate the house she was using.

Originally, the path of a harlot had been prepared for the girl. But somehow, it ended up that I had defeated the bandits because I had fallen for her…

"It's better than when I make it…"

When Aria looked a little sad, Novem consoled her.

"If you'd like, I'd be more than happy to teach you."

"I-I'll leave it to you."

… The feudal lord Ventra-sama didn't want to deal with her, so he pushed her onto me.

(Like this, aren't I looking like trash!?)

Novem prepared the necessary funds to turn me into a first-rate adventurer and even looks after me now.

Even so, the situation suggested that I had found another girl I liked and let her live in our house.

Of course, I didn't save Aria out of a guilty conscience or anything.

I had a prim and proper reason.

When the situation came down to this, I confessed my feelings to Novem. But it wasn't just Ventra-san who recommended that I take Aria in.

Novem also expressed her approval.

Right after I had finally resolved myself to confess…

“I am truly grateful for your feelings. But if I were to get married to Lyle-sama, I do not think this will become a comfortable place to live for Aria-san. By the time Lyle-sama becomes a first-rate adventurer, if you receive us both…”

… She said something like that.

(Even when my confession succeeded, why am I back at the starting point? And wait, I never imagined Novem would be recommending a Harem!)

It looked like that trigger for that were my words as well.

When I was leaving my homeland, I said them to make Novem return to her home.

【I’m going to become an adventurer, make a harem, and live a life of leisure.】

I ended up saying something like that.

And from that, Novem derived that『An adventurer that can properly manage a harem must be first class. And to live a life of leisure, they have to be the very best of the best.

As such,『my goal must be to become one of the greatest adventurers.』was how she understood it.

That was a mistake.

She was usually quite a perceptive girl, but I can’t even comprehend how she made a mistake there.

(I thought that if I made her think I was a useless man, she would give up and go home. Even so, she followed me… served me, and took my words to heart.)

Even when I had forgotten them, she faithfully remembered.

But if I may, I’d like to say it…

I really have no such intentions.

(Right, I have these guys… this【Jewel】…)

A Jewel was what could be called the complete form of a Gem.

A gem was a tool that recorded the Skills which individuals only possessed one of.

They weren't the main trend nowadays, but it seemed that by recording Skills like that, they would become complete upon recording eight.

From a gem, it would become a Jewel.

My own Skill, whose effects I have yet to determine, and the seven other ones from the past members of the Walt House were recorded over the ages by the blue Jewel .

However, the problem was…

『Aria-chan sure is cute… She was tormented by her shitty old man and driven out of shelter. What a poor child.』

An audacious voice emanated from the Jewel.

It was the voice of the Walt House's founder,【Basil Walt】.

『How about you look in a mirror! You'll see the face of another shitty old man reflected right back!』

A voice as if to pick a fight with the First Generation Head rose up.

It was the Walt House's Second Generation,【Crassel Walt】.

Wearing the garb of a hunter, the Second Generation was quite a plain existence in the Walt Family history.

The First Generation led a force to reclaim land and raise a village, where he became a feudal lord and a provincial noble. Thus started the Walt House.

Then the Third Generation spread his name by letting the retreat of the king's army succeed in a war with foreign powers.

What was more, he even died in the process, so even now, when stories about those times were brought up, the Third Generation【Sleigh Walt】's name often pops up.

Being stuck between the two of them, the Second Generation was inevitably quite plain.

… But the truth differed.

Haphazardly expanding his land, the First Generation persuaded barbarians to join him with his fists.

And the Second's unreliable-looking, aloof son only gave a light reaction to everything.

Forced in between the two, the Second Generation went through quite a bit of trouble to harden the foundations of the Walt House.

Even so, it was a little pitiful that he was never evaluated by history for that.

(… The Second's being especially hard on the First today.)

When it became a Jewel, the recorded Skills developed a personality.

Those were based on the recorded memories of the ancestors that used them.

When my own Skill manifested, and the gem turned Jewel, the ancestors also opened their eyes as Skills for the first time.

But, this Jewel was…

『They sure are energetic today, that First and Second Generation.』

The one who happily looked over their quarrel was the Third.

But the fact that I could hear them meant the Jewel was being put to use.

… Meaning my Mana would be expended.

Even when I couldn't use their Skills!

(Can't you guys just be a little more docile…)

Perhaps because the Skills had developed wills, the Skills could put restrictions on themselves.

Because of that, I had listened to Aria's request in order to become able to use one of them.

Why was there a need to help Aria, you ask?

It was because Aria resembled the First Generation's first love.

What was more, he kept calling her that girl's living likeness.

That led to me defeating a Bandit Brigade.

I became able to use the First Generation's Skill, and while it may be temporarily, I was able to use the other ones as well.

However, the Third's and Seventh's were still impossible for me.

Because of the reasoning that my body wouldn't be able to handle it, they were restricted.

(These guys definitely aren't a family treasure. This has to be a cursed item or something.)

Even if I thought that, the things that I couldn't do anything about just keep coming, and gradually, my evaluation of the Jewel continued to fall.

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I did end up accepting Aria, but naturally, what we needed on our team was fighting power.

For that, we ended up having her become an adventurer.

The individual herself said that she would feel bad if we just supported her, so she gave her acknowledgement.

She gave it, but…

"Well then, your party registration has been completed. While you have added Aria-san to your forces, you cannot extend Zelphy-san's contract, so please keep that in mind."

Shaved red hair, brown skin, and a muscular build. The guild

receptionist… Hawkins-san, spoke to us, and Aria seemed nervous.

His appearance was grim, but his work was done tidily and politely, so he was quite a proficient one in Dalien's adventurer guild.

"Y-yes!"

After Aria accepted her guild card, our advisor Zelphy-san called out to her.

"Don't be too nervous. You've got your standin' to worry about, so I'll be droppin' the honorifics on work time. Are you fine with that, Lady Aria?"

Having formerly served the Lockwarde House, Zelphy-san acted as our advisor under a request from the guild.

For us, who had left our homes, and were lost and confused, she taught us the foundations of being adventurers.

In preparation for her impending marriage, she left her own party and was currently taking guild requests to train adventurers.

… Was her public facade.

The marriage part was apparently true, but in the back, she was an adventurer with ties to the feudal lord Ventra-sama.

In Dalien, a town nice on newcomers, she was also one of considerable skill.

"Now then, you've got three members on you, but it looks like I have to teach your recruit from the basic stuff. I'll be training Lad… Aria in the guild conference room, so I'll be havin' you two take on some odd job requests."

Hearing that, I put on a blatantly reluctant face.

"W-we're still doing that?"

Novem looked at my face with a slightly troubled expression.

To encourage me, she spoke up.

“Lyle-sama, let’s do our best.”

Zelphy-san was all smiles as she looked at me.

I mean, we tricked a bit of money out of her employer. It seemed he worked Zelphy-san quite hard, so perhaps she wanted some revenge.

“Naturally. Well, they’re requests you should finish by the end of the mornin’. Once you’re done, Lyle’s goin’ to have to get his equipment in order. Your reserve sabre became unusable, right?”

“… Yes.”

When I was fighting the Bandit Leader, I ended up ruining my own weapon of choice, my sabre.

The enemy had a red gem… one that contained Skills that specialized in close quarter combat with him, so my spare sabre ended up no good as well.

I thought they would be reusable with a bit of repair, but the blacksmith I brought up the request with told me to buy another one.

“You got some money on you. You’ll probably be able to get quite a nice one. Well then, Aria and I are goin’ up a floor. Boss, I’ll leave the request explanations to you.”

Zelphy-san led Aria off.

Hawkins-san took out the request forms for the jobs we were scheduled to take.

“… Odd jobs again?”

As my shoulders dropped, Hawkins-san tried to cheer me up.

“Lyle-kun, don’t feel so down. It’s important to accumulate these sorts of requests as well. If you change your home, they look at records like these to determine your disposition.”

Dalien is only our temporary stay.

Once we build up our abilities, I think our home… the town we’ll use

as our area of operations will change.

“That’s right, Lyle-sama. Honest effort is important. Let’s try our best together.”

Novem directed a smile at me.

And Hawkins-san spoke.

“Ah, Novem-san has secretary work in the guild until noon. Lyle-kun has physical labor outside, so you’ll be separated.”

“T-that can’t be! Please put me on physical labor as well!”

As Novem said that, voices came out of the Jewel.

Having been heavily cared for by Novem’s family, the Forxuz House, the First through Fourth Generations showered the girl with favoritism.

『Novem-chan on manual labor? You’ve got to be bloody kidding me!』

As the First said that, the Second continued on.

『Lyle, it’s time to show your manliness.』

The Third as well…

『Novem-chan’s a good girl. Now Lyle, go say something.』

The Fourth was…

『You won’t let Novem-chan do something like that, right, Lyle?』

Threatening me in a low voice.

(… These guys… I’ve had it…)

Fifth Generation onwards didn’t have any special feelings for her.

Of all things, they thought of her as nothing but one from a vassal household.

『Putting a girl on manual labor is none too efficient.』

As the Fifth said that, the Sixth as well…

『Right. Well, she'll probably be in the way if she was there.』

The Seventh Generation… My Grandfather was…

『Making Lyle do physical labor or the like… even when he's supposed to be one with royal blood.』

Quite sad for me. He was a grandfather quite soft on his grandchildren.

I looked at Novem.

"I-I'm fine. Let's go shopping together in the afternoon."

Hearing that, Novem still seemed a little worried as she spoke.

"Please don't push yourself too much, Lyle-sama. Then, let's finish the paperwork."

Because the Jewel used up my Mana like there was no tomorrow, those around me were under the belief that my constitution was quite weak.

The reason for Novem's worry was that fact that I've collapsed numerous times.

(… For some reason, this doesn't sit right with me.)

I wanted to shout out that none of that was my fault.

1 - Growth

As always, I sweated during physical labor, received an evaluation, and returned to the guild.

The verdict of【B】was filled out on the form.

Perhaps because of the time of day, the second floor's receptions were heavily crowded.

Even at Hawkins-san's usually-vacant table, a line had formed. Looking closely, I couldn't see the aunty who was previously processing work at an extraordinary pace.

At the desk, a clerk I hadn't seen before was hurriedly doing work she didn't seem used to.

I inclined my ears to the surrounding voices.

"Did you hear? It's the third labyrinth."
"If that's true, it'll be hell. The feudal lord's troops were dispatched to clear a different one, right?"
"So that's why the guild's so busy. There've been quite a few lately."

From what I gather from the adventurers around me, it looked like a new labyrinth manifested.

If they were left alone, labyrinths would continue to grow in size. They were nests that continued to spew out monsters.

Even though major problems wouldn't arise from them spitting out a single, troublesome monster, if they were left alone for long enough, they would splurge up a large quantity, and the labyrinth itself would collapse.

There were also towns out there that existed solely due to the treasure obtained by defeating the monsters that managed the labyrinths.

But towns like that only have the know-how on how to manage them.

They cooperated with some organization like the guild and were made to exercise the greatest of caution.

Normally, though, labyrinths were subjugated the moment they were discovered.

If you cleared one, the guild and feudal lords paid out rewards, and your evaluation as an adventurer rises.

Adventurers that cleared labyrinths were the aspiration of children.

“They may just take applications and head straight to clearing it.”
“I’m curious about the treasure in the deepest parts of it.”
“I hope it doesn’t become a match of snatching and killing one another, though.”

While they talked about such ominous subjects, the adventurers were smiling.

But in truth, it wasn’t an uncommon story.

In the most inner room, there was a final guardian defending a treasure. They protected the item that could be considered the labyrinth’s core.

There was no doubt it was gold, or perhaps precious stones. There were cases where it was a rare metal as well.

But regardless of what it was, it contained the magic birthed by the labyrinth. A strange metal containing such magic… was a rare and expensive item.

They were precious ingredients to the production of Magic Items as well.

(If sold, it’s an instant path to luxury. Even in labyrinths that are easy to clear, if you sell the treasure, I heard you could do absolutely nothing but play around for two to three years.)

As I thought that, I heard the Second’s voice from the Jewel.

『In the past, they were places to train one’s self and experience【Growth】, though. So they use groups to subjugate them these

days…』

The Fifth popped up.

『When attempted individually, or in a party, the efficiency level was low. If played poorly, one would be defeated, surrounded, and used for the labyrinth's growth. If you think about efficiency, it's most secure to use a group, and take it out in one fell swoop.』

Hearing that, I wondered if that was really the case.

The thoughts on the presences called labyrinths were ones that changed by the times.

What I was taught… no, what I read in a book was that while labyrinths were able to give birth to valuable materials, they were also dangerous existences.

I never heard of the notion that they were places to train yourself.

『If the Fifth was still hunting monsters, then does that mean… the routine I left behind was still passed down?』

When the Second said that, the Fifth confirmed.

『So the Second decided it? Well, mobilizing people and going up against monsters proved to be a good experience.』

They both started into a talk about the difficulties of their first battles.

But what I was curious of was the【Growth】the two occasionally spoke of.

『The feeling varies by the person, but it's a sort of, you know… the sensation of opening your eyes? The first time I experienced it was, as I thought, from when I started fighting monsters. When I experienced Growth, I often tried doing unreasonable things, and I often failed, though.』

It sounds like the Fifth had a similar experience.

『I'm pretty much the same. Well, it was around the time when I had just risen to being a viscount, so I was fighting criminals more often

than monsters. But you can experience Growth against human opponents too…』

I get the feeling they're talking about a definition apart from the growth I know of.

Is there something besides having your body become bigger or maturing mentally?

『Even at latest, you should have experienced it once or twice by your early teens. It feels quite different than usual. Seeing me, my family made a face like, 'Ah, so he's experiencing a growth…' and it was quite irritating, you know.』

As the Second's voice lowered, the Fifth laughed a little.

『It's an intuitive thing. At minimum, a human experiences it at least twice in life, it seems.』

Hearing that, the Second was slightly shocked.

『It can be that low? At the very least, I felt it nine times. I get the feeling I wasn't fighting every day, and the first was around when I was twelve, I guess.』

『That's too high.』

I was listening to the ancestor's conversations, but for some reason, I felt a little anxious.

(… Um, I haven't experienced whatever it is you're describing even once, though…)

As I thought that, I heard Hawkins-san's delighted voice call out to us as always.

"Next in line, please. Oh, so it was Lyle-kun?"

"Y-yes, I'll be in your care."

We handed him the documents, and he happily processed them.

Perhaps being busier than usual was actually a joy to him.

❼

Having finished lunch outside, Novem and I went to purchase equipment with the money we had on hand.

The reason it was mainly my equipment was because my sabres were ruined in my bandit fight.

In the weapon shop Zelphy-san introduced us to, we looked at sabres.

“There’s less selection than for the other items.”

As I said that, the shopkeeper told me there was no helping it.

The male dwarf shopkeeper had a large, reddened nose and a scraggly beard on top of his characteristic short build and muscular body.

“The sabre doesn’t have much popularity here in Dalien. It’s more or less popular with the nobles, but here, people go out fighting often and move their weapons around a lot. When it comes down to that, sturdier swords hold up better. Oh, but the knights say that spears and blunt weapons, or perhaps axes, are more effective, you know.”

Hearing his words and looking over the store, I definitely saw more of those sorts of weapons.

As I thought, it was natural for the preferred weapon selection to differ from place to place.

I had come to buy a sabre, but perhaps I should really change my weapon preferences.

“What place deals more in sabres? I don’t care if it’s not within the city.”

As Novem asked the shopkeeper, he put his hand to his chin and looked up.

“I think the capital Centralle has a selection, but… perhaps the store that have ones fit for actual battle are few to be found. I do have an

acquaintance who set up shop there, but he's specialized in armor."

Excelling at handling metal, the dwarves often achieved success in fields like blacksmithing.

Naturally, even if you weren't a dwarf, it wasn't like there was anything preventing you from becoming a skilled smith.

"I can research and pin it down, but I think that looking it up for ourselves would be most to your benefit. If you're going, I can even write you up a letter of recommendation."

Being told by the storekeeper, I thought for a bit.

The sabres in the store were all crude, mass produced ones.

If I wanted the best, there would be no end to it. Since they were, at least, of better quality than the ones I had on me before, reserve included, I ended up buying two of them.

(I mean, I've come here using sabres all the way, and it's alright for me to be a little obstinate in something like this.)

The first weapon I ever received was a sabre.

Both Father and Mother were happily waiting for the day where I held up my blade and fought as a man of the Walt House… there was a time like that as well.

"What are you going to do with your previous ones? They're in quite a bad state, so if you want me to buy them, I can only pay you for the cost of the metal, though."

I left the sabres I had wielded before to the dwarf and said that it didn't matter as I accepted his money.

"Still, these are in a horrendous state."

Looking at the sabres I used, he said as such, so I apologized.

I mean, even if they were mass produced, they still had a maker.

"No, I'm not saying you're at fault or anything. It's just that I haven't seen a swordsman to use them like this anywhere around these

parts… for better or worse, this is a town kind on beginners. I could count the amount of skilled ones on my hands. If they grow up, they immediately flow out to somewhere better.”

He handed out the change, so I accepted it.

I turned to Novem.

“Are you sure you don’t need a replacement, Novem?”

Hearing that, she smiled and shook her head.

“Mine’s still usable. I already bought a knife as well. Even for protective gear, any more than this has been deemed unnecessary for now by Zelphy-san.”

“I see… that’s right.”

And to combat a slime, I doubt wearing metal armor would do anything to change the pain.

A shield and spear of wood were more than enough to defeat them.

Accepting the sabres from the storekeeper, Novem and I left the store.

❼

On the way back.

I suggested we go down a road with less pedestrian traffic.

“Hey… well… it’s about money, but I doubt this is enough to buy back your dowry… still, I want to return it to you.”

What I had on hand was around sixty gold coins.

It was the money left from the aid the lord gave us during our bandit subjugation.

Of course, after hiring people, getting food, and other expenses, it was mostly gone. What I have right now was mostly from liquidating the treasure the bandits had piled up.

When you thought of how our original funds were two hundred gold, we were clearly at a loss.

On my proposal, Novem, who was previously wondering what to cook for dinner, made a serious expression.

She shook her head and refused to accept the money.

“I am happy for your feelings, Lyle-sama. But that money is something that will be necessary to you from here on. I cannot accept it.’

“No, still…”

“If there is no helping it… let’s see, it doesn’t really matter when you do it, so please return it once you’ve become a first rate adventurer, Lyle-sama.”

I was hesitant over how to answer her.

I mean, my will to actually succeed as an adventurer was relatively low.

“G-got it… someday, just like when you bought them, no… I’ll become able to buy things even more extravagant. It’s a promise.”

As I said that, Novem smiled a little.

“Then I’ll be waiting.”

Hearing that conversation, the First spoke.

『… What a good girl.』

Following that, the Second onwards also added in their comments, but I elected to ignore them.

『It makes Lyle’s hopelessness stand out.』
『And wait, isn’t Lyle on the winning side by the very fact he has Novem-chan.』
『She’s different than the women I knew.』
『You(The Fourth Generation) just pampered mama way too much. Because of that, I got around to calling her nothing but mama.』
『Lyle, you have to keep your verbal promises. If you break it, you’ll

lose something valuable as a person.』
『The Forxuz House sure is succeeding in raising their kids. Despite that, the Walt house is…』

As I let the ancestors' opinions slide, the house came into sight.

❼

That night.

To ask what had been bothering me, I ended up using the Jewel's conference room.

Novem and Aria had both fallen asleep, and as I laid down, as if my conscious was being sucked into the Jewel, I passed out.

A round table occupied the center of the room, and the room itself was similarly circular.

Behind the splendid chairs around it, the doors to the ancestors' rooms were visible.

All over the place, crystals like the blue jewel were embedded around in varying sizes.

… That was the space we called our conference room.

The facilitator, the Fourth Generation, asked for the reason I had gathered everyone.

『We've opened a conference by our proposal, but it looks like you have a few things you want to ask. What do you want to start with?』

The glass-wearing Fourth Generation corrected the position of his spectacles with finger as he looked at me, and immediately ventured into the topic of discussion.

And so, I…

"No, well, there are a few of the finer details I was wondering about, but before that, there was one thing that caught my interest."

『What's that?'』

Being told that by the Fourth, I remembered the conversation of the Second and Fifth as I asked.

"Well… it's about 『Growth』, but…"

As I said that, faces full of curiosity were directed at me.

The First started talking as if to cut me off.

『Ah, right, Growths! Lyle, how many has it been for you? I mean, your Mana and your Stamina's a bit questionable. The other parts of you barely get a passing mark, but physically… how should I put this?』

The First threw the conversation off to the Second, who was close by. The Second clicked his tongue before answering.

『Your basic physical specs are low. From what I see by your magical competency, and sword skills, you're the type that lives solely by technique.』

I was being called a technical type, but I didn't think of myself as such.

The Third continued on.

『I thought about it when you pulled out both sabres, but could it be that your Growth is one that specializes in skill? Look, like that type that only focuses on a single point. They aren't rare.』

The Sixth nodded.

『Yep, they exist. People of that type increase their strength in their fields of expertise and become quite amazing, so if Lyle kept heading in that direction…』

The conversation started going towards what sort of type I was, so I raised my voice.

"Please listen to what I have to say! In the first place, what are Growths, anyway? Even if you call it a sensation, I can't understand that. Is it really any different from bodily and psychological growth?"

Hearing that, everyone stared at me in mute amazement.

My grandfather, the Seventh, grabbed both of my shoulders and confirmed it.

『L-Lyle!』

“Yes?”

『You’re fifteen, right? Your Skill has yet to mature, but it definitely manifested. So let me confirm this, but… up until now, you’ve never once experienced Growth? Like when you woke up, your intuition was different, or the sharpness of your movements was clearly better, or… try remembering! Like being reborn, that sort or peculiar sensation!』

Being told that, I did try to remember, but up until now, I’d never felt anything like being reborn anew.

The First also confirmed it with me.

『No, like… even when you’re just carrying out life like usual, that sort of… bang! That sort of feeling comes up, right? I mean, it felt like that for my third and fourth time.』

All of them had expressions as if they were observing something unbelievable.

But I never had such an experience.

“… Never.”

The Seventh opened and closed his mouth.

The Fifth asked in a level-headed tone.

『Lyle, I heard that you were ignored at age ten and onwards, but to what level was that? You still received a proper scholarly education, right?』

I gave an honest answer.

“Yes. I made sure to read through all the books they gave me.”

Hearing my response, everyone in the area flew into a panic.

『Wait a gawd daaaamn second!!』
『Eh, what? … Lyle, you used magic like that!? And wait, you can even use magic!?』
『How exactly should I assess this!?』
『N-not happening… an education of just handing him books definitely ain't happening…』
『We were naïve. Everyone here was. Lyle included. I guess this means we never got a proper grasp on the situation.』
『Until I could use magic at Lyle's level, I went through at least two growths.』
『… If only my son was here to send flying a few times…』

As I looked around at everyone, I inferred that I was in quite a bad situation.

All ancestors concerned sat back down on their seats and asked for a more precise explanation of what I had been through up until now.

The Fourth took lead once more.

『Lyle, how about you tell us… just how did you live?』

I spoke of whatever I could remember.

From around the time I was ten, I was generally alone.

My meals were generally brought to my room.

I generally had no conversations, and the teacher only handed me books…

After I had spoken to that stage, I held both of my hands to my head.

"W-what? Wait, that's supposed to be strange… isn't it?"

Everyone nodded.

『Quite. If you lived normally up until that point, it was something you should have noticed, though…』

As the Fifth began to think aloud, the First spoke.

『Is it the monster's handiwork? Does a monster that can change the atmosphere and state of affairs of its surroundings mean it's something like this? Still, isn't it still strange for Lyle to have never undergone a Growth before? Even if you're just living life normally, once or twice is…』

Once or twice.

Apparently, in the time I'd been alive, it was a normal amount.

The Fourth Generation sighed.

『Lyle… let me append my statement on you having low Mana. More importantly, you had some other things you wanted to know, right? Let's get those out of the way first.』

Hearing the Fourth's words, for now, I decided to talk.

"No… well…"

The Second was wary as he watched me.

A sort of face, as if to say, 'Is he going to be dropping a bomb again?'

『W-what is it this time.』

Just what…

"Just what is it that I should aim for?"

All the expressions around me seemed relatively amazed.

2 - Level Up

On the morning of my break day, I set foot into the guild's reference room.

To adventurers with guild cards, it was a room anyone could use.

In it, there was information on the monsters around Dalien and various other materials to be browsed through.

There were also books with the essential knowledge for adventurers recorded.

"Ah, here it is."

What I picked up was a heavy book.

The one who was put in charge today, the Second Generation, gave some orders from the Jewel.

『Lyle, our knowledge is fundamentally old. It's not that we couldn't teach you, but you should definitely check a modern reference book first. And wait, it would be bad if you didn't.』

What the Second Generation spoke of was something I was painfully aware of.

I mean, after I woke up and asked Novem about Growths, she dropped all the plates she had on hand.

It was good that they were made of wood. But still, since it made her look like she wanted to cry, I wanted to stop pressing her in various senses of the phrase.

(Just what was she thinking of to get that teary?)

The reason the Second was here to teach me about it was because he was the one who molded the Walt House's customs.

At the same time, the Second, Crassel Walt, used the information he got from the Forxuz House as a base to form the foundations of the

true provincial noble Walt house.

In order to facilitate Growth, his son and grandson… and the rest of his descendants were given a custom of going out monster hunting, it seemed.

The reason I said “seemed” there was that I had never partaken in such a custom.

Defeating monsters to encourage Growth. That was a sort of superstition.

The reason it was thought of as that was because Growths happened when carrying out life normally as well.

There were large gaps based on individuals, and this was concluded to be based on the sort of talent one had.

The Walt House’s Fourth Generation and predecessors understood the notion of monster hunting as learning to move people and polishing the coordination and ability or troops for war.

Of course, Fifth onwards only stuck their hands into the basics and started to trend towards leaving the rest to their subordinates.

『I never thought the Third Generation, Sleigh, would fail to hand down an important part of it.』

A large portion of the Walt Family’s Growth-related wisdom was, when the Third died in battle… No, it was passed on in form alone it seemed, with the most important part, the contents, omitted.

Becoming the Head at a young age, the Fourth Generation, for argument’s sake, upheld it because it was a custom.

I sat on a nearby chair, laid the book on a table, and opened it.

『Pertaining to the Connection of Growth and Slaying Monsters… it seems they’ve gathered quite a few case studies there.』

In it were examples gathered by the guild, followed by an interpretation by the author.

Sudden changes in one’s senses or physique were known as

『Growth』, and it seemed the study of them has continued from times old.

As I flipped through page after another, the Second halted me.

『Stop! Lyle, you're a little fast. Actually, I'm surprised you can even read at that pace.』

I looked around, and made sure no one was watching before I responded.

It didn't look like there were all too many adventurers using the resource room.

"Well, my life was pretty much reading inside and practicing magic and swordsmanship outside."

I mean, that really was my life since I started to be rejected.

Thinking back, it was as if I was locked inside the mansion.

『There's quite a bit of beneficial information put down, but based on my experience, it's a little different.』

Hearing him say it was slightly different, I offered an explanation of what I had just learned about Growth.

The current established theory was that humans stored up various life experiences, and those bloomed in a phenomenon called Growth.

For that sake, fighting monsters was a single, large type of experience, and not what facilitated Growth in itself.

That was a bit convoluted, but pretty much, it wasn't that defeating monsters caused one to experience Growth, but that Growth was the result of accumulated life experience. Apparently.

"Is there a problem in that?"

『No, that's not wrong, but… it's definitely possible to accelerate the process by monster hunting. I mean, in just what I can recall, I felt Growth at least nine times.』

Nine, when a civilian would go through one or two, was quite irregular.

A majority of the adventurer's guild's backbone went through it four to five times.

"Grandfather… the Seventh had quite some experience on the battlefield, did he not?"

The Second expressed his theory.

『I think you can accumulate experience like that too, but the efficiency with monster hunting is different. Especially against ones stronger than me, it felt much faster.』

"Stronger ones, is it?"

By battling against stronger and stronger enemies, Growth can accelerate, according to the Second.

『Of course, if you defeat enough small fries, it'll happen eventually too. Back in my day, I went through quite a spot of trouble having the soldiers go through them during group battles. That was back when I made records and worked earnestly.』

Without any useful knowledge, having suddenly received the seat of family head from the First, the Second was surprised having learned the state the reason was in.

What was more, the Walt Family's rule was held together by nothing but the First's charisma.

Despite his barbarian style, among other things, the First was quite respected by those of the same sort.

『Even if you get in experience of the same quantity, the speed of personal Growth and Growth rate varied. There were some who experienced them at the same time, but within them, there were some times when only a portion of them did. Besides, in their worst fields, I felt quite a bit of Growth from some.』

It wasn't like you'd yourself rapidly change.

Just that… there was a wall you were never able to go past, and you finally surpassed it. That sort of sensation.

That was Growth.

“What about my type of person?”

『Individuals can grasp it intuitively, so I can’t really say anything about that… but you should be able to recognize a change within yourself. The fact that you hadn’t experienced one was shocking, though.』

Starting with the Second, the ancestors had listened to my words in surprise.

In any case, it was a phenomenon that everyone experienced.

Children experienced one in the first half of their teens, or even before ten if early. Adults confirmed that and imparted their surprised children with their knowledge on Growths.

That was common sense. General knowledge…

(But I didn’t know that.)

I thought, as I continued to turn the pages.

『It’s just that there’re a lot of superstitions and lies about stories like these. Back in my day, there was a trend called a power stone that was supposed to speed up Growth, but it wasn’t effective at all…』

“I see you tried it.”

The Second’s tone had gone dark, so I was able to comprehend he had actually tried using and testing it.

What’s more, according to him, it was something intuitive, so finding evidence that he had been fooled was quite difficult.

『In the end, it ended up that their sale was prohibited on Walt territory. Good grief, those were some severe expenses, you know.』

With the Second, I continued all the way to the end of the book. There was still some time left until the designated meeting time with

Novem and Aria, so I picked up another one.

There was one book that had caught the Second's interest.

I returned the thick guide to its former shelf, took the interesting book in hand, and returned to my seat.

"What sort of book is this?"

『No, I just found it interesting due to its age. Lyle, can you read that book?』

Hearing that, I tried to read it, but perhaps because of the changing of times, or the author's way of expression, it was much different from modern tongue.

"It's a bit difficult, but I can manage."

『Really? Then I guess that's it…』

When I voiced my lack of understanding, it seemed the Second was able to understand something, and he told me it was alright if I put the book back already.

『Well then, you can't leave the Ladies waiting. Lyle, how about we arrive at the meeting point early?』

"Understood (Just what was he trying to learn from that?)"

I was curious, but it didn't seem like the Second was in the mood to answer.

❼

The meeting point was a space a little removed from the guild with good public order.

For better or worse, the guild contained quite a few ruffians.

Within all of that, meeting the two of them may invite a bit of trouble.

In order to avoid something like that as much as possible, we set a well-patrolled area as our meeting point.

Before it became noon, I arrived at the space.

I was a little early. Our set time was in the afternoon.

Around me, nice smells emerged from a food cart, tickling my nose. I turned my eyes to it, and saw something being taken out of a saucepan filled with oil.

So it was something fried.

The First Generation reacted to that.

『Oy, Lyle. What sort of food is that?』

There were some people I occasionally saw around me, so I put my hand to my mouth and responded in a small voice.

Looking at the nearby cart, it looked like he became curious.

“It looks like something made of potato fried in oil.”

As I said that, the First showed his admiration.

『I see, so there are things like that as well. My time had none of these things…』

The First said the time he lived in was one where the chaos finally died down, and where they went through quite some stress getting back on their feet.

It seems we’ve an incomparable abundance of resources than the world he saw two hundred years ago.

『It’s a good era.』

The Third said that, and the Fifth opened his mouth.

『I think that flowed in during our time. They could be cultivated, even in the wastelands, so I remember we were able to bring in quite a harvest.』

The Sixth was the same.

『Those were nice. Because of them, the percent of the fief not troubled by hunger increased.』

From that conversation, the First gave a subdued whisper.

『I see… then my goal is…』

There, I heard another voice.

“Lyle-sama.”

It was Novem.

She came leading Aria by the hand, and in her other hand was a bag of paper.

『Okay, Lyle… take their bags. Also, be cautious with your choice of words. You’ve noticed that both of their clothes are different than usual, right?』

The Fourth gave me some advice.

I suddenly noticed, but both of them really had changed clothing.

“Ah, that looks heavy. I’ll carry it.”

As I took their bags, I found they really did have some considerable weight.

“Thank you, Lyle-sama.”

“Eh, well… I’m fine with my own.”

As Aria refused, Novem whispered something into her ear.

And Aria presented her baggage to me. She seemed a little troubled, but it didn’t look like she was threatened, or anything.

(What did she tell her? More importantly…)

Unlike when I saw them in the morning, the two of them were wearing prettier attire than usual.

(H-how am I supposed to praise them!?)

As I stared at them, Aria spoke.

“W-what? I-if it doesn’t suit me, then just say it…”

After she said that much, the First called out.

『Lyle! Compliment! Now! Aria-chan… no, complement both of them to high heavens!』

But the Second gave a cold reaction.

『Did you ever even compliment my mother?』

Before things would become a mess, the Fourth issued some orders.

『For now, tell them that it suits them. The reason you were silent for a while was because you were surprised about their change in atmosphere. Say it.』

On the Fourth's advice, the Fifth laughed a little.

『As expected of mama's bootlicker.』

"Fu… those clothes suit you. Well, your atmospheres were slightly different, so I was just a little surprised. Yeah, you're lovely (On the Fourth's advice, I left the money to them, but I think Novem can manage that herself.)"

I complimented them while thinking that, and Aria's face was tinted red.

"U-um… thanks. I didn't really have any money, and borrowing it felt a little awkward, so…"

As the air turned delicate, Novem added on a follow up.

"Aria-san, from here on, we are comrades in the same party, so if you just return it when the time comes, that'll be fine. I'll be waiting."

"Y-yeah."

While I looked at Aria as she stubbornly restrained herself, I turned to the skirts both of them had put on.

They usually wore pants that were easier to move in, so it felt somewhat fresh.

In times past, Novem was usually wearing a dress when I saw her, so seeing her wear casual clothing was relatively refreshing in itself.

(She seems to be stubborn, but I'm glad she was forcefully pulled into buying it, I guess. It looks like in order to get Aria to buy it, Novem had to buy something for herself, which is nice in itself. I see. So that's why Novem, who's even more restrained, bought one as well.)

Before I left the house, I told them to go shopping on the Fourth's advice, but I somehow felt peace of mind now.

The one who casually occupied himself with matters like these was the Fourth.

Aria had little luggage, and she was also troubled about a change of clothes. Using that, I sent her out to buy herself clothing, and Novem accompanied her.

Due to her restrained personality, I told Novem she could indulge herself and buy whatever she wanted as well.

(I'll have to thank the Fourth.)

It was just that… the other ones generally had problems with women.

Despite whatever they said about me, it wasn't like they were anything great. It was generally the earnest Fourth Generation that gave me advice on female relationships.

(And wait, since our house was under the Forxuz clan's care, it's not like I'm especially looked after by Novem, right?)

Around the First's time, they helped him as a House in the neighborhood, and they faithfully served Fifth and onwards.

The Walt House was always left reliant on the Forxuz House.

(Isn't it strange for them to only be condemning me for that?)

As I thought that, the three of us went to get a slightly late lunch.

❼

Night.

I was called, so I headed to the Jewel's conference room. There, I saw the same faces as always.

"At times like these, what sort of greeting should I give?"

As I gave a slightly off-track question, the Fifth said it didn't really matter. The Fourth started the meeting.

『Well then, Lyle's here, so let's begin on our next objective. Is what I wanted say, but what we've decided on is something much too simple to require a meeting.』

"Simple?"

『Right, simple.』

As the Fourth nodded, the Second stood and began explaining.

『Lyle, for now, just go outside and fight monsters. It'll be terrible if you're left never having experienced a Growth even once. And wait, perhaps there's a problem with you.』

A problem with me.

A constitution that didn't experience Growth, or perhaps some fatal flaw.

Thinking that made me anxious.

『Well, there are some who require some extreme experiences for Growth. If we think of you as that type of person, if you experience it from here on, you'll get some reprieve from your stamina and mana problems.』

Hearing that, I was relieved.

But there was something I was curious about.

"Um, so about how many times do people with slow Growths have

them? Definite numbers, please.”

I had looked through the book, but it only went as far as to say there were personal differences.

The examples it presented as well didn’t go into record of people with exceptionally slow Growths.

At best, it said that ones with slow growth would feel it in their mid-teens. The Second put his hand to his chin as if to remember, and he unraveled the worst example he could think of.

『… In my time, there was one who got his first Growth in his twenties.』

『For real!?』

The First was surprised, and the others as well.

I was the same.

“… Eh? So that means you guys are going to be harassing me about it for that long?”

On my words, the Second was about to nod, but…

『Wait a second, did you just say something that sounded like we were harassing you? Oh, so you thought of us like that!?』

The Second said that, and it sounded like the Fourth was of the same opinion.

『It’s that. It’s that so-called training sort of problem. See, if you don’t use your muscles or magic, they won’t build, right? That sort of thing.』

To the Fourth’s excuse, I directed a suspicious look.

Then you could have just explained it that way from the start. Since you didn’t, that meant you either thought it up right now, or it was an excuse.

“How dubious.”

『I'd like it if you didn't doubt me so. Hey, look at our faces. Do these look like the eyes of liars?』

Hearing the Third, I looked in his eyes. Those were truly clear pupils.

"T-truly, there may be some sort of effect like that, but…"

As I was about to be satisfied with that, the First spoke.

『Huh? Did someone say something like that?』

The First disclosed the truth.

It looked like everyone here wasn't really caring about it as they spoke. Their spiel on Magic and so forth was something they thought up on the spot.

"Y-you guys…!!"

As my shout resounded through the conference room, everyone made off to their private rooms with a smile.

The Third…

『Hahaha, sorry, sorry.』

The Second also gave an excuse as he opened his door.

『No, sorry 'bout that. See, I never thought you hadn't experienced Growth before. I thought you were just the type whose Mana didn't grow much.』

The Sixth probably felt a little sorry, as he offered an apology.

『I thought you were a technique type, and that you had put a burden on yourself to you could patiently train your body. That's what I did.』

The Seventh…

『So you all plan on running!? I'm sorry, Lyle!』

A majority of them fled.

At the end, the Fourth brought it to a close.

『Well then, let's bring it to a close here.』

Saying that, he excused himself and escaped through his door, before vanishing.

"J-just what is this!?"

As I looked around the room, I noticed a grinning First Generation had remained.

"What is it? Is there still something you want to say?"

While I insulted his attitude, the First seemed delighted.

It was an unexpected reaction.

『Well, you've got quite a bit of spirit in you there, kid! The first time you came here, your eyes looked like those of a dead fish, and I couldn't get myself to like you, but you've become quite decent.』

Hearing about my dead fish eyes, I scratched my face.

I didn't think it was that bad, but I'll bet it was at least to a certain extent. After being driven out and losing everything, I could do nothing but put up some bravado to show to Zell.

Since Novem was here, I was able to come this far in the end.

Otherwise, there was no doubt I would have acted without any decent planning.

"T-that isn't the case. It's just that I was a little depressed back then."

Hearing that, the First nodded.

Perhaps he was just in a good mood today.

『That so? And about that… so what did you think of for what you're going to do from here?』

When he had brought up Celes earlier, I remember him telling me to think for myself.

At that time, I didn't really care what happened to me.

It was just that Novem was there, so I thought I would give it a little of an earnest effort.

Even now, it wasn't like I was actually aiming to become a first-rate adventurer.

"I don't really know."

I thought the First would definitely resent me, but his reaction was surprisingly light.

He folded his arms,and prepared his next question.

『… What do you think of Aria-chan?』

"I'm calling her by name on Novem's recommendation, but essentially, she's someone who's living with us."

To be honest here, I was fine as long as Novem was by my side.

I put out the notion of a harem as mere lip service, and I'd never actually thought about it.

I just wanted someone to look at me. I just wanted someone to stay with me.

"I think you have a bit to ponder over regarding Aria, Founder, but I have Novem. To be honest I think it would have been fine if it were just me and Novem."

Together with Novem, I would go somewhere nice, quit being an adventurer, and live a modest life.

Perhaps that would be nice.

After I voiced such a weak statement, I was sure the First wouldn't forgive it. But even here, his reaction differed.

『Well, do whatever you want. It's your life. What I hated was your dead fish eyes and your feminine personality. Ah, I'll add on that I hate how conscious Aria-chan is of you.』

I kinda understand what he meant by conscious of me.

But I had no intentions of answering to that.

I had Novem.

“Well thanks for that. My face is surprisingly on the better side, it seems, so perhaps I’m quite popular? Unlike you, First Generation.”

I gave him a sarcastic line.

The First glared at me…

『Y’ bastard! … So you’ve gotten to be able to say it, haven’t you!』

He shouted, before bursting into laughter.

“What’s with you today? Usually, it would end with you shouting.”

(Saying my own face is good is somehow embarrassing, I was never really that conscious of it. And wait, is he really in a good mood, today?)”

As I asked what I was wondering about, the First traced his face with his finger.

With a vague response, he dodged the question.

『Well, I’m just in that sort of mood. Ah, also, I won’t tell you to get around to liking Aria-chan, but please look out for her. The glasses that lives around here should be knowledgeable about something like that, so ask him if you have to.』

Glasses… the Fourth Generation.

Restraining the smile that had started to form, I answered.

“… Well, if that’s all, I can do it.”

『Hey, were you just about to smile?』

I suddenly became panicked upon the First hitting the mark.

(This man’s instincts are sharp, or how should I put it… He really isn’t a bad person. Though his personality’s quite barbaric.)

『Oh, bullseye?』

“… Well, the impression of his glasses truly are a bit strong, that Fourth Generation.”

『Right!』

On that day, I talked and laughed with the First Generation for the first time.

3 - Aria Lockwarde

Leaving the city of Dalien, and walking to a spot around an hour away, we…

Novem, Zelphy-san, Aria, and I took on monsters.

From the space close to the forest, the forms of monsters who were settled in the area emerged.

It was dangerous to enter the forest to fight, but in a clearing with few obstacles, the four of us… well, in all actuality, the three of us, could manage some way or another.

“Lyle, the preparations are complete.”

Novem finished her preparations, and I slashed at the approaching goblin with my sabre.

Its right arm, which had been clutching a club, was sent fluttering in the air, as it jumped back to retreat.

“Do it, Novem!”

As I gave the order, Novem activated her magic.

“Ice Spear!”

From the ground, needles manifested one after another and rained down on the Goblins.

We entered the forest to purposely incite them. Like that, we provoked and led out the forest’s monsters.

We would fight as a group against the monsters that came out. But for this purpose, we needed someone to act as bait. This goes without saying, but Zelphy-san wasn’t going to lend a hand.

As an adviser, she would step in if we ever tried to do something beyond our power.

And if our lives were ever in any danger, she would lend a hand. That was Zelphy-san's job.

The role of bait was accepted by me.

Usually, I would enter the forest, make an adequate amount of noise, and draw them out… however, I had my ancestors' Skills.

The Fourth Generation's was plainly amazing.

He began to go into an explanation of his own Skill.

For some reason, an image of him pushing his glasses up descended on my mind.

『It's a simple elevation of movement speed, and it's normally quite user-friendly. It's one that requires a lower amount of Mana than the others, and for the current Lyle, the burden isn't that much.』

The Second looked at my battle and offered some advice.

『You can time your use of Full Over, to temporarily gain access to the Fourth Generation's【Speed】… it's painful that you can't use other Skills simultaneously while you do that, though.』

If I tried using it with the Fifth's Skill, my Mana would plummet.

With some breaks here and there, I searched the area for enemies, and dragged out goblins that seemed easy to defeat.

The forest's insides were rough for me, but using the Fourth's Skill, escape was possible. Even in an unfamiliar environment, it put out ample movement speed to elude enemies.

With the bad footing of the place, it was quite a life-saver.

On top of that, when inside the forest, I could take on individual monsters alone.

For now, rather than gathering materials, I wanted to defeat Monsters to experience a Growth as soon as possible.

The battle ended, and I looked around.

“Novem, you should rest. I’ll leave lookout to you, Aria… I’ll go around and collect the materials.”

The only thing that could really be retrieved from goblins was the equipment they had on hand and their magic stones.

I’ve heard tales of manufacturing things with their skin, but there are some psychological limitations I have to dismantling a monster of human form.

That was also proof that we were not yet used to this job.

Looking at one of our work cycles, Zelphy-san offered some applause.

“You’ve become quite skilled, haven’t you? You’ve got a magician and healer in Novem, but that’s quite an important role. The fact that you have a vanguard to protect her is also major.”

Zelphy-san praised Aria, but the individual herself was directing her eyes at the ground.

She probably understood who it was that was having the easiest time here.

“Your movements have gotten better than before, so let’s proceed like this for now. Normally, we’d store up some funds around this time and prepare for our next job, and that was the original plan, but… you guys are a little rich. We can wait a little more before proceeding forward.”

The richness she was talking about was from extorting the Lord and beating the bandits.

By turning their savings into money, we secured some funds. At present, we could actually live without working temporarily, but as you would expect, that was no good.

As it was, I was called the useless noble Lyle in the city of Dalien.

(While I did intentionally cause that, it’s quite irritating.)

I was tolerating the name, but it would be infuriating if even my

actions turned to those of a useless noble.

I approached the Goblins that had been torn up by the Ice Spears in order to collect their stones and equipment.

But as I did that, Aria tapped my shoulder.

“I’ll do it, so Lyle, go stand guard.”

“Eh? But…”

As I looked at her, I saw that perhaps she hated her own ineptitude, so she wanted to at least handle collection.

Zelphy-san scratched her face and gave an attitude as if to leave it to me. Similarly, Novem just looked at me.

Just do whatever you want, was what they probably meant.

At that time, I thought I would hear an outburst from the First of, ‘Don’t make Aria-chan push herself!’ but his voice didn’t come from the Jewel.

In its place…

『Lyle, keeping watch is also an essential role. When the time comes to it, you should keep Aria, who still has enough energy to move to her fullest, on lookout. Once you’ve collected those magic stones, you can also go on rest, Lyle.』

That was the Second’s response.

As I earnestly looked at her face and hesitated to speak up, the Second continued.

『… When she can’t even perform a lookout job satisfactorily, don’t be letting her take up even more roles. You gave her an important job, and she’s telling you to change because she’s unsatisfied there, isn’t she? The leader of this party is neither Novem nor Zelphy. It’s you. If you don’t get a firm grip on it, youll’ll become inept before you know it.』

Feeling satisfied with his opinion, I left lookout to Aria.

“… I’ll do the collecting. I’ll leave you to keep watch, Aria.”

As I said that, the individual herself made quite a despondent face.

The Third Generation spoke up.

『I can understand where she’s coming from! That sort of feeling of wanting to work hard, but having nothing to run on. I don’t think she particularly despises lookout, though.』

But the Second’s stance didn’t change.

Even if he had a favorable attitude towards Novem, the Second harbored no such emotions towards Aria.

I didn’t think he hated her or anything, but he wanted her to fulfill her role.

“Aria.”

As I called out to her, she let out a whisper of affirmation and returned to her post.

After taking a deep breath, I started on the job I had yet to become accustomed to of removing the magic stones from goblins.

❼

Having entered the forest as bait again, I confirmed my surroundings.

Activating a Skill, I was able to sense responses from several enemy monsters.

“There are a lot of Goblins. Also horned rabbits, I guess? Those are the most abundant near here.”

As I said that, the First and the others’ tones of voice changed.

『Horned rabbits, you say!? Kill them! Exterminate them. Slaughter them without a single one left remaining!』

The Second was the same.

The space between trees was narrow, and while I was cutting away the weeds with a dagger to proceed forward, he shouted.

『Exterminate those harmful pests! Don't leave any one standing! There is no sympathy kept for their ilk!』

The Third didn't give off his usual aloof impression.

The maliciousness he would occasionally show was covering his entirety.

『Hahaha…Lyle, to protect the fields, leaving even one alive is too much. Be happy, Lyle, you've found some food for your Growth. The peasants will be happy because their fields won't be ravaged. Yep, it's all positives here.』

Having ventured forth as bait, I was alone, so I could let out my voice..

"You guys are acting a little scary. Do you really hate horned rabbits that much?"

The First stepped forward as a representative to answer.

『Just how much damage do you think our fields received because of those things!? If you discover them, then chase them to the ends of the earth do deliver the finishing…』

But there was a single existence out there with a differing opinion.

Unexpectedly, it was the Fifth.

『… Isn't it fine? You should just let them off. See, unless you attack them, they won't try to assault you or anything.』

I was a little taken aback from that surprising side of the fifth, but the others were different.

Especially the First, Second, and Third who looked after fields. Their rage was amazing.

『Oh right, you find them cute, do you!? When I see their soft and fluffy fur, I *do* get the urge to peel it all off!!』
『Right! Just how much pain do you think those things caused us!?』

『Search~ and Destroy~!』

On the three's anger, the Fifth turned back to me.

『Don't screw with me! That isn't related to Lyle's Growth at all! Lyle, go find another monster immediately!』

The Jewel was getting noisy, but I had recovered a bit of Mana during my break.

However, it wasn't infinite.

"I'd like it if you all get over it already. If I collapse here, I'm surely going to die, you know!"

I complained to shut up the ancestors, before searching for enemies in the area again.

It was just that as before, the ones giving off the most signals were horned rabbits.

"My Mana's been wasted on a useless ruckus."

Nearby, I found a white and fluffy horned rabbit.

As I approached it with dagger in hand, it noticed me and tried to intimidate me with its sharp teeth.

Its size was about slightly larger than a baby, I guess? The look in its eyes was sharp, and I couldn't relly call it all that cute.

Remaining alert against me, it leapt forward.

『Dodge to the side and slash at it. Your opponent can change position in the air.』

The First gave the orders, and I carried them out.

It put out its sharp horn and jumped at me, so I stepped to the side and cut at it as it passed. As I drew a single line with my dagger, the white pelt was stained with blood.

『NOOOOOOOOOO!!』

I heard the Fifth's emotional screaming voice.

(At first he gave off quite a cold impression, but animals? Or perhaps he likes cute things?)

If he screamed any longer, I felt I would run out of power in the middle of the forest.

Determining that I had done enough for now, I confirmed the rabbit had died and put its corpse into a leather bag before exiting the forest.

❼

I left the forest and went towards the meeting point to find Novem standing up and waving her hand.

But for some reason, her attitude was strange.

As I approached with the leather bag in hand, Aria was moved to tears.

“What happened?”

I asked Novem, but Zelphy-san was the one who answered.

“Ah~ It’s because I said Aria could play a little more of an active role. Just a little.”

It seems that as an adviser, Zelphy-san had scolded her.

Something probably happened in the time I was away, but Zelphy was acting quite awkwardly.

『Scolding a former superior’s daughter must be rough.』

As the Second said that, I thought of Zelphy-san’s feelings when she put Aria in the party anyways to look out for her.

(I wonder if she couldn’t abandon her. I mean, the feudal lord Ventra-sama did say she worked to let the Lockwarde House stay in Dalien, or something.)

Zelphy-san was an adventurer who carried the will of the feudal lord

Ventra-sama.

Usually, she adventured as she made reports about the situation of the city and the guild.

It wasn't only a bad thing, and it was actually something that indicated Zelphy-san's competence.

When we had just come to Dalien, the guild wasn't able to leave ones that stood out as much as us alone, so they introduced an adviser.

At the time, two suspicious noble children was how we were recognized by them.

『She was fifteen or sixteen, right? It's hard to deal with them around that time, but her background's quite clear, and the only ones she can rely on are Lyle and Zelphy. If you plan to become first-rate, then she'll be a valuable fighting force, though.』

On the Second's opinion, the First didn't interject this time.

Recently, the First's outburst frequency has… become much lower than before.

(Has he recognized me a bit?)

『Even so, this is bad. The individual is beginning to think her efforts are fruitless. How about we give a follow-up for Novem.』

The Second threw his opinion out there carelessly, but I thought that perhaps the women had gotten together and said what they wanted to say.

"Well then, what will you do for today, Lyle?"

Perhaps to change the mood, Zelphy-san asked for my opinion.

There, Aria requested a renewal.

"I'll take up baiting next! So let's continue. I haven't really done anything today, and…"

Hearing her opinion, the Second gave some orders.

Not as an adventurer, but one who had experience leading people, I'll bet.

『Let's return. I can see fatigue showing on you and Novem. You can't think of the advisor Zelphy as part of your forces, and the impertinent Aria is out of the question. What's more, you seem to have completed your one day's quota.』

The Second looked at our forces and told me to return.

My personal opinion was the same.

Of course, that was because my own fatigue was quite severe.

(If they didn't start acting up along the way, I'd probably be fine for another run, though.)

Going over those regretful memories, I ordered our return.

"… Let's go back. Our earnings are plenty for the day."

As I said that, Zelphy-san looked a little relieved.

Perhaps she thought I would propose us to continue forward.

Novem showed no opposition.

She didn't show her tiredness, but perhaps due to the tension of battle, her movements were a little dull.

However, Aria was a separate issue.

"Wait! I can still go on. I'll take on the luring role!"

Zelphy-san let out a deep sigh, and the Second spoke up.

『Lyle, you declared a retreat. Go make Aria satisfied with that.』

(You do realize this is my first time with something like this, right…)

Even if I didn't want to, there was no helping it.

Any failures resulting from fatigue would affect our future actions.

Also, if we returned completely worn out, it will be hell if we

encountered a monster along the way.

“Novem and I are at our limits. We’ll probably be completely exhausted by the time we get back. So I want to return and prepare for tomorrow.”

As I said that, Aria sunk into silence.

She likely understood it was impossible for her to continue on alone.

She understood, but I saw her unsatisfied expression.

“Hey, let’s start movin’ already. Confirm your belongings and make haste!”

Hurrying on Zelphy-san’s words, we immediately went into preparations to return to the town of Dalien.

There, I heard the First whisper to me.

『Lyle, drop by for a little today. I have something to talk about with you.』

It was surely about Aria. Thinking that, I touched the Jewel hung around my neck to give a reply.

Looking around, I saw that Novem was directing her eyes at Aria occasionally.

She wasn’t glaring or anything, but she simply looked at her for a little, before returning her field of vision to her purse.

It looks like she was preparing to leave.

(Just how does Novem view Aria?)

I was simply curious about Novem’s feelings.

Notes

- I’m not really sure how to translate 魔石, what I’m currently translating as Magic Stone. It’s literally magic stone, not any specific ore or anything, and it’s the word FF has as Magicite in English, BTW. That’s trademarked, I’m pretty

sure.

4 - Blue and Red

In the room that connected my psyche to the Jewel.

It was as if I was seeing a dream.

The conference room within the gem was that sort of real world of dreams.

In that room, I faced the First Generation. Today, the Third was also in attendance.

Only he was just sitting there, and he wasn't participating in the conversation.

"What did you want to talk about regarding Aria?"

『Right. How do you view Aria-chan's impatience?』

I could understand her impatience.

She wanted to become a first-class adventurer no matter what. Therefore, she continued going in circles. Unlike me, there was no doubt she was overflowing with aspirations.

The current me did have the desire to experience a Growth as soon as possible.

But how was I going to live henceforth? Even now, I was troubled over that.

"… She's going around in circles. I think she could calm down a little."

To put it bluntly, I wasn't really counting on her as that great of a fighting force.

She gave us a numerical advantage, and it was a relief to know she has got my back.

To me and Novem, she wasn't one who would cause harm.

『I want you to resolve that. Can I leave it to you?』

“… Eh? I will?”

Hearing his request, I crossed my arms.

She was a comrade, so it wasn’t like I was unwilling.

If it could be resolved easily, then even I’d be the one requesting for it. But the Third looked at me and shook his head.

On the contrary, the First was overjoyed at me accepting that.

『Good answer! If we don’t dispel the worried of Alice-san’s living likeness, Aria-chan, I’ll never be able to calm down.』

From my point of view, what I didn’t understand was the reason why she was trying to hurry things.

Right now, it was the time for us to earnestly and steadily build up power under Zelphy-san’s direction. If she recklessly got herself injured, there would be no point.

The time when we receive teaching was limited.

(I wonder if I should really ask for an extension.)

Those were the feelings I held.

『Well then, that makes matters fast. Lyle, go fight Aria-chan. Of course, with her using her Gem. You… are prohibited from using Skills.』

“… Eh?”

On the First’s proposition, it ended up that I would be fighting Aria.

❼

The inside of the Jewel after Lyle had left…

『Are you sure about this?』

The Third spoke as he looked up at the First, who was sitting on the table.

He had perceived the First's intentions of making Lyle and Aria fight, but he didn't think everything would proceed as planned, it seemed.

『… You know, I'm not really that smart.』

On the First's words, the Third nodded.

『Yeah.』

『Hey, at least deny it a little! You're my grandson, aren't you!!?』

The First screamed at his cold treatment from the Third, and the Third broke out into a smile.

Their personalities differed, but to the First, he was his grandson. Compared to the other ancestors, it looked like he knew how to deal with the man.

『I'm not smart, so I can only think of doing it in this way. If it were you, you could probably think of as many better ways as you wanted.』

The Third ceased smiling, and disinterestedly unraveled the alternate method he had thought up.

『Aria-chan… I think it's a good way for her to gradually build up confidence in herself. She could use the Gem and rack up some achievements battling monsters. Those around her would praise her, and Lyle would just have to provide a follow up. Well, Lyle's also abnormal, so he probably won't look out for her that much. Those sort of niceties should be left to Novem-chan, I think.』

It wasn't like everyone could grow immediately.

The Third wanted to keep the long term in mind and gradually improve the relationship of the three to get the party to take a good shape.

The other heads of history had similar opinions.

The Second despised those who found dissatisfaction with the jobs

they were assigned. It seemed like he would propose something more severe.

『I'll bet that would be fine. Steadily build their relationship, and the three of them will hit it off well. That's right. There's no doubt we can handle it cleverly.』

By getting Lyle and Aria to fight, both of them would learn the areas they were lacking in. That was the plan the Third had caught on to.

For Aria, her own lack of ability…

For Lyle, the strength of human will and desire…

He wanted to get them to understand they were both at fault. Of course, starting with the First, the others were waiting for Lyle to get motivated for himself.

Even so, feeling that the First was being impatient, the Third oversaw their discussion and bore witness to it.

『So do you hate shrewd methods?』

『Can't stand them. But perhaps that sort of way would have a better success rate. It took quite a while for me to realize that, though.』

The First Generation had quite a frank personality.

There were some unexpectedly delicate sides to him, but he was the one who headed the pioneering corps, cut down the forests of monsters, and expanded fields of his own.

A normal person would give up after understanding the difficulty of that, or make the appropriate preparations for it.

『If it's your guys' ways, it'll probably tie itself up nice and pretty. But… in that case, they'll start to rely on one another.』

『There's no mistake to be had for relying others in areas where you're lacking yourself, though. It's just that I truly do feel Lyle needs to find a little more motivation.』

The First stared intently at the Third, who was usually quite carefree.

『When you say it, it's got no persuading power, man.』

『Of course~.』

Saying that, the two of them smiled, but the First stopped and made a serious expression.

If he was but a simple fool, the pioneering corps would have been annihilated, and eaten up by monsters. His extreme instincts and perception made him someone the Third was poor at dealing with.

But he also understood that some senses were needed sometimes.

『Let's let them clash, and if that doesn't work, then I'll be satisfied with that. If it's that person's descendants, I don't think her feelings will lose to Lyle.』

『… So you're saying there's no way Lyle will lose as a whole? Well, he probably won't.』

There was quite a gap in ability between the two.

Aria was the daughter of a noble. She could probably use magic. Looking at her stance while holding her spear, it could be understood that she was trained as the daughter of a warrior.

But compared to Lyle, she fell short.

Even to Lyle, who had never undergone Growth before, Aria fell short. Just like the boy, she didn't have the necessary aptitude as an adventurer yet, but more than that, she didn't understand herself.

She was just squirming around recklessly and meaninglessly.

『Let's leave the healing to Novem-chan and just have them go at each other's throats for once. Well, it's a nice way to resolve things, fitting of me, isn't it?』

『So exchanging blows to deepen friendship? No, is it affection in this case? Lyle still hasn't accepted that, though』

The Third seemed to be having fun.

In truth, the scene of Lyle's troubled figure after Novem approved of

a harem was quite interesting to him.

『That part included, I want them to collide. Lyle isn't looking at Aria-chan at all. I want him to recognize her. Even when he knows the pain of being ignored, that bastard is…』

The First let out a sigh.

The Third got the feeling that the First felt Lyle overlapping with himself.

『… Are you sure you aren't talking about the you of the past?』

Hearing the Third's words, the First glared at him, but he soon shook his head and took a deep breath.

『Perhaps you're right.』

For a while, the two stayed there, lost in thought…

❼

Morning.

After finishing my meal, I told Novem to go out and call Zelphy-san to the house.

I told Aria I had business with her to let us talk.

(It's the First's request, so I guess we'll fight.)

I didn't know his aim, but I had a good idea of it.

It was probably something like getting Aria to learn her ability level, or something like that.

We walked into the yard, and I turned to her.

"You have your family's gem, right?"

At my question, she tilted her head and took out the red pendant she had turned into a necklace from under her clothing and showed it to me.

“Of course I have it. In order not to lose it, I always carry it on me. What of it? We’re going out to subjugate monsters today, right? What are you planning, even calling Zelphy over?”

As I thought, because of her impatience, she wanted to finish the preparations and go hunting already. From my point of view, we should put some breaks in with moderation and systematically set out to defeat monsters.

There was no point if you pointlessly got yourself injured, and it wasn’t like we were short on money or anything.

“… When the two of them get here, there’s some vacant land over there, so won’t you fight me?”

On my proposal, she seemed bewildered.

“Why should I? If you don’t like me, then you just have to say it!”

I wasn’t sure what was going through her mind, but it seemed she thought I didn’t like her.

I didn’t have any recollection of having treated her especially cruelly, so I didn’t get where these accusations were coming from.

“It’s not like I dislike you or anything. If you have a gem, then you should know how to use it, right? Then you have a need to test it out, don’t you?”

Hearing me bring up the gem, her face stiffened.

Perhaps she was remembering what happened to the large man from the bandit brigade.

From an overuse of Skills, blood erupted from all over his body. His muscles tore and blood oozed from his mouth and eyes. It wasn’t a good sight for the eyes.

Of course, we were able to treat it with medicine, but I wasn’t sure about his internal bleeding.

The irregular use of Skills…

The compensation for that was large. I mean, it wasn’t the Skill you

manifested yourself, so when you tried to use someone else's Skills, the burden was quite large.

Using the past heads' Skills, I understood the difficulty of that first-hand.

Even the Skills linked to me by lineage were ridiculously hard for me to control.

If I didn't put some moderation on my usage, I would have destroyed my body just like the large man.

"Are you scared?"

"I-I'm not scared! If I used this, I'll definitely be injured, so I don't want to is all!"

Looking at Aria hiding her fear, I thought to myself, 'so you don't care if I'm injured.'

I did measure her strength, but as I thought, even if she was using Skills, Aria was probably weaker than that large bandit.

It wasn't because she was a woman, but that she had an overwhelming lack of experience. Having only learned magic and spearmanship in theory, she couldn't reach the level of the large man who practiced on monsters.

"If you're worried about injury, then there's no problem. Novem will treat you, and if it gets dangerous, we'll stop."

Perhaps out of anger for my tone of speech, Aria's expression changed.

She was clearly angry.

"What's with that? Do you think I'm no worthy enemy of you? I admit that you really are strong. But we won't know something like that unless we try!"

To Aria, who began to show determination, I proposed that if that be the case, why don't we just fight?

"Then when Novem and Zelphy-san arrive, we'll start. I'm fine with a

wooden sword.”

“Just use your regular sabre! Even I’ve practiced to use Skills!”

Hearing that, I found it a little surprising.

“Oh really?”

Not pleased with my impression, she glared at me. I had no idea just what I’d done to attract such a scowl.

I mean, they were my frank and honest thoughts.

“Look down on me all you want. You’ll be the one getting hurt!”

Aria turned her back to me and left the area in long strides. I saw her off and let out a sigh. I was going to be fighting her at the First’s request, but I was starting to wonder whether or not this was really alright.

I got the feeling I had made a fatal mistake as a member of the same party.

Since there was no one around me, the Third spoke to me.

His tone was fed up.

『Lyle, have you ever seen your own face in a mirror?』

“What are you talking about? I see it every morning when I wash my face.”

『That was sarcasm, you know. Anyways, that aside, there’s clearly a problem with your current attitude.』

Hearing about a problem, I tilted my head.

An irritated Fourth spoke in a low voice.

『Taking that attitude against a girl is one thing, but I wonder if you really should be fighting. More importantly, you really are dense, Lyle. Or could it be you’re doing all this on purpose?』

I couldn’t comprehend.

I was unable to understand just what it was the Third and Fourth were trying to tell me. In order to let Aria know her current skill level, and to get her to have a taste of what it felt like to use her Skills. That was why we were fighting, was it not?

The Sixth, who didn't speak up often dropped by for once.

『You're not noticing any of it? Lyle, you…』

The Seventh let out a remark, as if to pressure me.

『That attitude right now was certainly rude. Still, Lyle, I also think you need to look at yourself and reflect on it.』

If I had to pick a side, the Sixth and Seventh usually supported me, but still they said I was in the wrong.

As I tried to recall whether I had said something bad, the Fifth entered the conversation.

『If you didn't notice, then that's where it ends. Well, you're young, so I guess there are some things we cannot help. Look, it's about time you start preparing yourself as well. Also, just as with Skills, don't use magic.』

While the Fifth said that, I didn't have such intentions from the beginning.

"I won't do anything like that. I don't want to injure her or anything."

『… Don't want to injure her, is it? Well how grand of you.』

The Fifth also sounded fed up.

I returned to the house and started preparing. I hung my sabre at my waist and decided to carry my spare as well.

Perhaps because Aria had left first, there wasn't anyone in the house.

At times like these, I start to remember my lonely days back at the manor.

"It's really quiet. Just like at that time."

Saying that, I looked around the room. Normally, Novem was doing housework, and Aria was trying to assist her. That was the scene as of late.

It was only recently that I started to take in that imagery as if it were normal. Before that, Aria's presence was always slightly unsettling.

(As I thought, harems and me are two separate things. Also, I don't think that sort of thing will be pleasant.)

It was mainly the expectations of my surroundings, and the First's request that led me to taking in Aria.

But perhaps that was a mistake. I thought.

From the start, I didn't think too much of her. I never even tried to think of how it was I thought of her.

As I absentmindedly stared at the ceiling, I heard a voice.

Zelphy-san and Novem were in front of the house.

❼

I headed to the vacant lot to find Aria waiting for me.

Likely because she had finished warming up, she was sweating a little. Perhaps because of determination, the eyes glaring at me harbored quite a strong will.

Due to the redevelopment of the area, many evictions were carried out and houses were demolished, creating a lot of empty space.

In one of such places, the girl with a red orb hanging from her neck, Aria, faced me.

The sun hadn't even started to rise yet.

(This'll end before noon, wont it?)

In my head, I made plans so as to end my fight with Aria before noon came.

“You sure look calm.”

It sounded like she was provoking me, she let out those lines as I had a break in my concentration. Without a doubt, Aria was mad.

Looking at that, both Novem and Zelphy-san seemed fed up.

Yesterday they were fed up with Aria, and today, it seemed they were fed up with me. Their eyes were clearly trying to tell me something.

“I’d like it if you notified me of a change in plans a day in advance. I mean, I’ve got my schedule to keep too. Well, I’ll follow my client. It probably won’t be a complete waste. But Lyle, are you even motivated at all?”

Zelphy looked at me with doubtful eyes, and Novem was the same as she stood beside her.

“Lyle-sama, please concentrate. You’re being rude to Aria-san. At this rate, you’ll be gravely injured.”

I nodded to a worried Novem, pulled out my Sabre, and took a stance.

Aria also held up her lance. Her temper seemed impatient, and she was putting a lot of needless power into her stance.

“I’ll be going at you seriously.”

As Aria declared her serious intent, I nodded.

“Be careful not to injure yourself.”

At that moment.

Aria took a large step and suddenly started repeatedly thrusting out her lance as if to impale me.

It was a Skill the large man displayed.

I turned half my body to avoid it and used the hilt of my Sabre to repel it. Having her stance destroyed, she fell forward, and I jumped aside.

With one hand on the ground, she raised her head with her eyes wide open. And she angrily gritted her teeth as she glared at me.

“Why didn’t you attack me?”

She stood up and corrected her posture. On the contrary, I was confused.

“Eh? No, I mean… It’ll be over soon enough…”

As I stated my true and honest feelings, Aria’s expression became more and more grim.

Looking at that expression, my heart suddenly started to hurt.

(What is this?)

Aria swung her lance, and a shockwave shot at me. Its output wasn’t as high, nor was its blade as sharp as the one the large man displayed before. I dodged.

Returning the pole she had swung in a large arc back to her body, Aria looked out of breath.

She forcibly used a Skill, and it looked like she was exhausting her stamina. She had neither the technique nor power to use her Skills consecutively. The proof was in the pudding.

However, with her sweat pouring out and her breath cut short… she continued to come at me.

“Not yet!”

Her weapon let off a faint light, but she just stabbed it at me normally. I took the blow with the sabre, but the feel was different from before.

Petrification…

This was likely a Skill as well. As I dodged the next two blows, she likely realized I had seen through her movements.

If I thought about the remaining Skills, there was that muscle strengthening as well. It didn’t feel like she was using it, so perhaps

she wasnt' used to it yet.

I dodged her thrust spear, stepped close to her, and grabbed the shaft with my left hand.

"Ku!"

She struggled to make me let go, and I was about to tell her the match was over already. But I couldn't let out my voice.

(Why…)

Aria thrust out her weapon to create distance and glared at me.

"What's with that posing… If I'm really that weak, then just end me already!"

Out of breath, and with a despaired expression, tears began to flow down her face.

Looking at that, I was able to slightly comprehend what the ancestors were trying to tell me.

(I see, so the attitude I showed Aria was… the same as Celes's.)

I got the feeling I knew the source of the pain in my chest.

I understood the ancestors' intent.

I could grasp the reason for Novem's and Zelphy-san's eyes.

I could even nod at Aria's mortified face.

"I see. So I was never really looking at you, was I."

I get the feeling that the figure of the girl mortifyingly holding up her spear, about to burst into tears, had overlapped with mine own.

5 - The Birth of a Skill

(This person… I wonder just what sort of person Aria is.)

I faced the girl letting out tears as she held her spear aloft.

All I knew was that she was the female successor to the Lockwarde house. She lived along with her father in Dalien, and when she thought her red family heirloom gem was stolen, she tried to rely on one formerly related to her household, Zelphy-san.

I knew much too little about her.

I never assertively talked with her.

Since I had Novem with me, I had naturally created some space between us within the house.

Perhaps I was simply trying to avoid facing her.

“Looking down on me… Even I… Even I…!”

She probably has something she wants to say.

There must be various thoughts and feelings going through her head.

And yet, I…

I hold up my sabre, and take a deep breath.

Looking at the girl in front of me, I readied my blade.

Due to her fatigue, she’s full of openings. She’s shed a considerable amount of sweat. With the consecutive use of Skills, both her stamina and mana are reaching their limits.

(Why was it… that I did exactly what was done to me to Aria?)

Wanting someone to see them.

Wanting someone to hear them.

Even so, just thinking of her as a burden pushed onto me, I avoided her. I mean, she probably had things she wanted to say as well.

(Is that what the ancestors were trying to get me to notice?)

I could never understand why I had to take Aria under my wing.

But right now, I get the feeling I've become able to understand it just a little.

I… I was turning myself into Aria's Celes.

"… The next one's going to be a serious blow."

As I said that, Aria made a surprised expression. But with her tears streaming, she made a serious face, and nodded.

The ones watching us, Novem and Zelphy-san seemed a little relieved.

(Even if you know you can't win, there are things you have to challenge. Wanting to be recognized… unable to forgive it. Unable to bear the pain.)

After waiting for Aria to collect her breathing, I broke into her stance.

As I closed the distance, she swung her lance horizontally at me so as not to let me get a hold onto it.

I kicked the ground, and she looked up at me as I approached her from the air. As I swung down with me sabre, Aria used her lance to take the blow.

But just through the difference in power, her knees were forced to the ground.

I started to hear a creaking sound, but to lock her onto the ground, I continued to increase the force I exerted.

"Even with this gap in power, why won't you use the Skill that supplements your own?"

On my question, a pained expression distorted her face.

So that’s her answer.

“You can’t use it? If that’s the case, the bandit brigade’s large man was a more skilled wielder.”

I retract my sword, and kick the lance away. Aria rolled across the ground with it. She immediately stood, but she was covered in mud.

Having been released from my hold, she corrected her stance, and stabbed at me. More than before… compared to when the fight had started, her movements were duller.

I continued to dodge her lance, and stepped into her stance, bufore hitting the hilt of my sabre into her stomach.

If I gave a serious blow, Aria would really be in danger.

Having been hit, the air was forcibly expelled from her lungs, but with tottering steps, she took some distance.

“… You won’t use magic? Not that I’ll be using any.”

I tried some provocations, but it looks like she wasn’t in a state for something like that. Her face was pale, and she was sweating heavily.

Only the eyes that continued to glare at me hadn’t lost their light.

(So she’s resolved herself.)

The difference in skill was clear as day. But Aria never dropped her weapon.

Seeing that situation, the ancestors inside the Jewel, who had been quiet for a while, offered me some advice.

No, perhaps it wasn’t something like advice.

The First spoke.

『Watch closely, Lyle. Witness the moment where a Skill is born. Strong will, and individual ability. Born from emotions, the weapon granted unto mankind.』

This may sound natural, but Skills had a bit of a history to them.

For the humans who were born weak, and didn't hold the power to fight against monsters, it was one of the graces afforded to them by god.

The Skills that emerge differ based on the person.

To fight monsters, god granted a single possibility.

That's what Skills are, I've been told…

The red gem hanging over her chest started to radiate light.

"… The moment a skill is born, is it?"

The red gem she possessed made it easier for Skills with direct relation to direct combat to manifest.

Just as the blue gem that was passed through the Walt Family's heads of history encouraged Skills from the Support Class to surface, Aria's clan had one that encouraged Vanguard Class Skills..

"With this!!"

Aria took a strong step, and came at me with speed greater than before.

I dodged the spear that suddenly came before my eyes, but she immediately swept it at me horizontally.

I heard the Fourth's voice.

『I guess it resembles my Skill. But in battle, it temporarily allows for extreme acceleration, it seems.』

They looked similar, but he assured me it was different. But she really did accelerate temporarily to get in a greater amount of moves than before.

Without time to evade, I pulled out my spare sabre, and used ot to take the blow.

Sparks flew from the clashing of metal.

But Aria’s attack hadn’t ended.

“More!”

Thrust, sweep, and cut.

I dodge various attacks of the sort, and began to be forced into a defensive battle.

If I lost focus, I would lose. My situation changed in an instant.

The Second spoke.

『Vanguard Class Skills generally give these temporary explosive strengthenings. They’re quite troublesome.』[1]

If I dodged a lance from the right, another would soon come from the left. Against consecutive blows like that, my two swords were put to the defense.

Sparks scatter, and the sabre blades I had just bought were starting to chip.

But at the same time, I was certain that the battle was already settled.

“It’s the end.”

I relax my posture, and looked down at the girl out of breath.

She was kneeling on the ground, her lance stabbed into it. Using it in place of a cane, she was somehow able to prevent herself from collapsing.

The burden of all the consecutive attacks she executed came down on her.

Temporarily raising speed to explosive levels to initiate a series of attacks. It’s probably something like that; Aria’s Skill.

Perhaps because she couldn’t concentrate any power to her legs, her body was shaking. Because her own Skill had suddenly manifested, she had continued to use it recklessly.

When I tried looking at my sabres, the blades was quite worn out.

(I'll have to repair or replace it.)

Thinking that, I stabbed them into the ground, and started off towards her side. The surrounding earth had been level, but now it had been beaten uneven.

While thinking she overdid it, I considered coming later with the appropriate tools to correct it.

But right now…

"That was an amazing Skill. I was surprised."

As I call out to her, she looked up at me.

"… It's not like it would let me win or anything. I already know. I'm inferior to you! But it was mortifying. Just when I had become free, I found I couldn't be of any use at all… I didn't ever want to return to that life again. I just wanted to become able to sustain myself!"

Seeing her burst into tears, I didn't know if it was right for me to have called out to her here.

That's just proof that I don't know her at all.

Novem ran over, and started applying healing magic to her. As the light enveloped her, she gradually stopped crying, and like that, as if she had lost consciousness, she collapsed on the ground.

Zelphy-san went up to her, and propped up her body.

"… That wasn't really a method I should be praising you for."

As she directed accusatory eyes at me, I put a finger to my face, and thought of what so say… in the end, I couldn't return a response.

"Lyle-sama, can you help me carry Aria-san? Her stamina and mana expenditure are more severe than they look, so I want to let her rest quickly."

Novem spoke in her usual tone, and I nodded as I approached Aria.

Should I shoulder her, or lift her up normally…

And as always, starting from the First up…

『I think you should go with the princess cradle.』
『Just Carry her on your back normally.』
『How about putting her over your shoulder! You know, like a fireman!』
『Gently hold her in your arms, and bring her to the bed.』
『If she's unconscious, then they're all the same.』
『How about you get Zelphy to help as well? Get her to lend a shoulder or something.』
『Well, you are going to be putting her on her bed, so how about embracing her?』

Their opinions weren't aligned at all.

Just how free these guys are, I thought, as I lifted her in my arms.

Seeing that, Zelphy-san started to whistle teasingly.

Novem smiled, and…

"I'm a little envious."

Saying that, she walked ahead of me, headed to the house, and began preparing the instruments to nurse Aria.

❼

Night.

As I was moving my body around in the yard, I heard the Third's voice.

『Doing the same things, or perhaps coming to resemble the person you hate, you loath, isn't an uncommon story.』

We put Aria to bed, so today we didn't go out, and treated today as a break.

While swinging practice wooden swords in the yard, I conversed

with him.

“You want to say I’m just the same as her, right? I noticed it for the first time when I was fighting Aria.”

Saying that, I swung the two weighted swords with all my might.

『So you noticed? But what I really wanted you to notice was feelings.』

Feelings…

I get what he’s trying to say. Right now, I lack desperation.

I can’t say being impatient, and going around in circles like Aria is the way to be. But there must be a problem with having no emotion behind my actions as well.

“But it’s not like earning my meals as an adventurer is all there is to life. Right!”

I swing the two swords, and get in an attack on my imaginary enemy. No matter how sharp my swings are, they dodge them all, and defend against them.

I suddenly started breathing faster.

No matter how much I polish my technique, I remember the fear of turning my blade on an opponent it would never reach.

I drop the swords, and touch my chest to get my hastened breathing in order.

『Just who were you imagining when you swung your sword? Want me to take a guess?』

“… No thank you. More importantly, about that topic from before.”

Suddenly remembering, the Third continued the topic.

『Right, right! Feelings, it is. Yep!… Lyle, you’ve also manifested a Skill. You were near the blue gem we’re sealed in when it happened, so it’s likely a Support Class. It’s just that the reason it’s still unclear to you is a matter of feelings.』

“My Skill, is it?”

There’s no doubt I have one. The ancestors also told me there was no doubt about a reaction from the Jewel.

But I have no idea what sort of Skill is it.

『The things called Skills are largely effected by your personal emotions. Right now, it may be natural that you can’t activate it.』

Hearing it from the usually carefree third, I also felt the same.

Looking at Aria today, I was able to comprehend.

Strong feelings are what mold the shape of Skills.

But perhaps the current me doesn’t have nearly enough of such feelings. After continuing to pursue, from the moment I learned I could never hold anything in my hand, it felt like a hole had been opened in my chest.

I’ve tried to forcibly fill it in, but as of yet, I cannot.

『I can understand you not having motivation and all, but right now, you have Novem-chan’s… and even if you may be reluctant, Aria-chan’s futures in your hands.』

The reluctant wasn’t a mistake.

I never said I would take charge of her, but talks proceeded arbitrarily without my input, and she suddenly was put at my side.

It was arbitrary. Ridiculously arbitrary.

Even so, Novem ended up approving.

“Am I in the wrong? Was my objective of living a leisurely life with Novem wrong?”

On my inquiry, the Third gave a response in his normal light tone.

『You’re the one to decide that, Lyle. None of us have the right to choose. I mean, you’re reluctantly accepting the current state of affairs, so if we were to settle everything with our orders… would

you be satisfied, Lyle?』

Satisfied… perhaps I would be.

As if he had seen through me, the Third spoke.

『Being swept along with the flow may be nice and easy. That's how I was. Before I knew it, I was being called a righteous general, and a loyal subject, and all… it was actually quite troublesome. You know, I never had that sort of intention.』

The person I heard he was from the stories passed down were too far separated from the individual himself.

My breathing was back in order, so I collected the swords, and sat down on a nearby rock.

『… Have you still not decided on a goal, yet? Or could it be you really want to live quietly with Novem somewhere far away?』

I'm starting to not know myself.

Is it really alright to kick out Aria after she was trying so desperately?

She was placed on me as a reward, but if I were to thrown her out here, I wonder if she would be able to make a living for herself.

My amount of worries has started to grow.

As I was mulling over them, the Sixth came out.

『It seems you've got a lot on your mind. Worry all you want. When you look back on it, you'll always feel like a fool asking yourself why you worried over something like that.』

Human troubles…

As I looked at the sky, the stars were glimmering quite beautifully.

❼

The next day.

Aria had opened her eyes, but she was left in a state where she couldn't move.

She had pushed herself to use Skills, and as a result, she placed too much of a burden on her body. Because of that, Novem ended up looking after her.

That being the case, naturally, the only one who could go out and work was me.

I went to the guild's reception counter, and together with Zelphyy-san, I chose a request to accept.

They were all physical labor intensive jobs, so I wondered if Zelphy-san's payback was included somewhere in there as I looked at the request forms lined up on the table.

"Choose whatever job you want. I'll bet you'll be working alone for a while, Lyle."

The one who acted of their own volition, and left Aria in a state where she couldn't participate in the party for a few days, was me.

To Zelphy-san, who grinned as she pointed at all the tedious requests lined up, I had no words to return.

Looking at our exchange, Hawkins-san came to my rescue.

"Zelphy-san, you're an advisor, are you not? I do think there's a problem with your request selection being influenced by your personal sentiment."

Zelphy-san shot back.

"Don't be so cruel, boss. With that, you're making it sound as if I chose nothing but intense requests to get some petty revenge. Even when I selected these ones keeping Lyle's sake in mind."

On her obvious theatrical tone, Hawkins-san seemed amazed.

But from the sheets lined up, I chose the one that looked the hardest.

Seeing that, Zelphy's eyebrows twitched a little.

“… So you’re not going to complain today.”

In the past, I always offered some complaints when I took on odd job requests. Zelphy-san surely remembers.

I uninterestedly signed the documents, and handed them over to Hawkins-san.

“Even like this, I’ve got the livelihoods of two others on my back. I can’t really go around not working.”

“So you say. Even when you still have the sum the feudal lord afforded you.”

As Zelphy-san said that, I waved my hands, and departed from the receptions desk.

❼

The receptions desk after Lyle had left…

“Well he’s gotten quite reliable. When he first got here, he didn’t look like he knew his left from his right.”

Hawkins relected on the first time Lyle stopped by the guild.

The advisor, Zelphy, stuck her elbow on the desk, and rested her head on her hand.

“I thought he was just some pampered noble kid, so my job was getting’ closer to observation than guidin’. But he turned out to have quite an amazin’ side to him. Well, becoming reliable’s a good thing. I mean, he ain’t a noble anymore.”

Hawkins began to process the documents he accepted, and he smiled as he remembered Zelphy’s past.

“It’s as if he’s a certain someone. Zelphy-san, remember you used to complain whenever you accepted a request as well?”

As Hawkins brought up the past, Zelphy got sulky.

“The me of that time was still oblivious to the world! Back at home it was always housework and etiquette. The world was completely different.”

A fallen noble turned adventurer is set to go through quite a bit of trouble.

IT’s because their sense of values and common sense didn’t get through on a fundamental level.

“I understand it was quite a bit of trouble for you. They hire adventurers as well, so I often hear about the troubles those adventurers went through regarding etiquette when working under them.”

The worlds they lived in was truly different.

“… It would be nice if Lady Aria was able to make it.”

On Zelphy’s true feelings, Hawkins organized the paperwork as he gave a response.

“Even normal people go through trouble upon becoming adventurers, and they lose their lives as well. I can’t say it’ll all be alright, but perhaps Lyle-kun will do something about that.”

Zelphy directed a doubtful gaze at Hawkins’ high evaluation of the boy.

“Lyle? His reputation’s the worst in Dalien, you know.”

When he had subjugated the bandit brigade, Lyle had repeated quite a few hopeless actions. Because of that, Lyle’s popularity was quite low within the city.

For an adventurer using Dalien as their area of operations, that was a fatal mistake.

“Well, it’s true that he received taxpayer money from the lord, and gathered more than a hundred people to do the job. Of course, it’s not mine to say what’s going through his head.”

Hawkins’ confusion on the matter was understandable.

Without any motivation, the one who continued to rely on his party member Novem was Lyle.

But when the bandits did show themselves, he personally took action, and resolved the problem.

As the two of them were talking, one of Zelphy's acquaintances lined up in the neighboring desk, manned by an older woman.

After her documents were swiftly processed, she called out to them.

"Yo, if it isn't Zelphy!"

To the middle aged face ridden with scars, Zelphy made an unpleasant expression.

"So you were still alive. How 'bout retiring sometime soon?"

The man smiled at her sarcasm, and the young adventurers behind him made troubled faces.

"So you're also an advisor?"

As Zelphy said that, the man nodded.

"Of course. These young'uns are the hope of Dalien, so I thought I'd go out on a bit of a long trek and impart 'em with some competence."

As an adventurer, he had more experience than Zelphy.

Having done work with him numerous times, Zelphy felt a little jealous at his words.

"Well, I'm happy it seems to be all fine and dandy on your side."

The man looked at Zelphy, and burst into a grin.

"More importantly, I heard it. .You're off protecting some idiotic noble son, ain't 'cha? You sure don't have any luck in 'ya, Zelphy-chan."

Having a –chan added to her name, a blue vein began to emerge on Zelphy's forehead before Hawkins cleared his throat.

The other man raised his hands to around shoulder level, and Zelphy

clicked her tongue.

“Domestic strife is prohibited in the guild. Also, as an adventurer, you have to make sure not to cause trouble to others. More importantly, you’re both advisors, so I would appreciate it if you set a better example.”

As Hawkins sighed, the man gave off a bitter smile.

“Don’t be so stiff, boss. I was also at fault, but this sort of thing is like a standard among adventurers.”

Zelphy glared at him before leaving the counter. She was probably off to check how Lyle was doing.

“Good grief. Still, a long trek, is it? Are you sure it isn’t too soon?”

Hawkins looked at the youths who had employed a veteran adventurer to advise them.

It was a party of five, and from a glance, it looked like quite a balanced party.

There were three on the vanguard, and a hunter with a bow for the rear.

The last one was likely a magician by the staff in his hand.

“Going small scale doesn’t suit my style. I want to get them to be able to rake it in on their own soon.”

He was a different sort of adventurer than Zelphy, but he was thinking of his employers in his own way. From the start, the adventurers chosen as advisors were those that were good at looking after people.

In a similar way, Zelphy-san said quite a few things, but she never threw out a job, and had quite a diligent side to her.

“Is that so? Well, please exercise the utmost caution. The important thing is to return alive.”

As Hawkins offered a suggestion, the veteran adventurer took his troupe, and left the desk.

At the empty reception desk, Hawkins turned his eyes to the adjacent counters.

In the back, a young beauty had formed quite a long que.

A majority of them were young male adventurers.

Next to her, a middle aged lady was finishing up work swiftly.

The main body of adventurers knew their work would be finished swiftly, so they had made a line there. Both had formed a line, but the flow was completely different.

In the beauty's line, the flow was slow, and many complaints were thrown around.

The other one disinterestedly completed her work quietly, so the line moved quickly.

Even so.

"And today as well, no one's going to come to me…"

… Hawkins let out a sigh.

Notes

1. Lyle's are all perpetual passives (if he had the mana)

6 - Day Off

To adventurers, one of the important things to remember was taking a break.

Naturally, you can't just go out and fight monsters every day.

Similarly, there aren't any adventurers that keep on taking on odd jobs every day.

Resting the body is important, but equipment also needs periodic maintenance.

If you hold high-class equipment, then the maintenance costs are likely just as high. But such maintenance costs a bit of time.

It's troublesome if equipment doesn't pull through when it comes to it.

For that sake, Zelphy-san ordered us to take breaks in moderation. Her policy was that if we were going in over our heads, she would stop us.

If we weren't doing something essential, she would point it out. And in advance, she would give an explanation of what was needed.

That may sound immensely obvious, but if you asked, among the people employed as adventurers, there were many who just polished fighting skills in actual combat.

Thinking it was better off if such people didn't become advisors, I started to read a book in the resource room I had periodically started to commute to whenever it became a break day.

But today, I wasn't alone.

"… What?"

With the only desk in the entire narrow resource room in between us, I faced Aria.

From that previous matter, she was also trying to keep some distance from me.

But today, here she was, facing me in the resource room. When I thought about how I should have delayed a bit, and came at a different time, I realized that we lived under fundamentally the same cycle, so my free time, and hers usually overlapped.

“It’s nothing. And wait, did you really read all that?”

Aria pointed at the mountain of books to my side. She also opened the book that Zelphy-san had suggested she read.

It was mainly about the roles of people in parties.

In comparison, I didn’t really have anything I wanted to find out, so I randomly picked out some books to read, and repeated that cycle.

“Of course I did. I happen to like reading.”

I like immersing myself in stories.

And of all things, you can get by without thinking too many needless thoughts. From ten onwards, the time I could read was the time I could escape from reality.

“And wait, why are you even reading one on agriculture? I doubt that’s one that was kept in the guild.”

On Aria’s question, it wasn’t me, but the Second that answered.

However, unlike with Novem, his treatment of her was rough.

『Based on the situation, you might be sent to assist in another village’s farmwork. Since Dalien’s gotten larger in scale, that sort of request may be few to be found, though. And wait, you don’t even know something that simple!?』

Due to the growth of the city, such requests had stopped coming to the guild. But still, the books alone were left in the reference room.

I softened up the Second’s words, and transmitted them.

“I’ll bet it was necessary in the past. I mean, even Dalien’s guild had

a time where it accepted these sorts of requests, right?”

In truth, the agricultural book I had on hand was slightly old. But the Second, and the book-loving Third were full of interest in it, so they had me flip through it for them to read.

The cheerful Third Generation looked at it, as he signaled me to flip to the next page.

『Looking at this technological progress really makes me jealous. If there was a method like this back then, then perhaps our times would have been better ones. Technology sure is important… Lyle, please flip the page.』

Perhaps reading books was my hobby.

But the ancestors were different.

They wanted to see just how different their eras were from modern day, and they were interested in new technological advances.

From that part of it, I see they really were feudal lords.

“… Do you plan to stick your hands into farming next?”

Keeping her eyes on her own book, Aria posed a question. Since the time she became able to move, this was the first she ever started up a conversation with me.

“No, I was just a little curious.”

I’ve already read up on the applications of magic pertaining to agriculture.

Using magic, it wouldn’t be a misconception to say the technology to make life more abundant is constantly being polished. But there, there was a single unspoken rule.

Never use nothing but magic to complete a single job, or so it was decided.

It may sound like a needless rule, but my opinion is that they were taking mana consumption into account.

To magicians… especially people who use nothing but magic as their weapon, drying up their mana reserve was a matter of life or death.

This sort of specialized magic was likely used by people who specialized in it.

I thought the rule was decided based on that, but it seems there was another reason.

(I guess there are some things you can't learn just in books.)

After actually going out and living life, I often felt that was the case. But I still don't think it's a waste for me to be here reading books like this.

In comparison, it didn't seem that books were quite compatible with Aria.

She made a difficult expression as she looked at the pages.

It's not that she can't read, but perhaps that it doesn't suit her personality.

Her garments are one thing, but she's quite a lively girl for a Noble Lady.

"Do you hate reading?"

"I don't hate it. It's just my weak point. I was often made to read a lot in the past, but until recently, I didn't have such time."

Father and daughter. I heard that the father didn't decently work, and lived a liquor-soaked lifestyle.

In a family environment like that, Aria likely had her hardships.

Even now, she has yet to bring up her past, but I could imagine how such a conversation would turn out.

To a girl like that, the First offered his sympathy. In general, the only one who sympathized with her was the First Generation

『So you went through a lot, Aria-chan.』

The second gave a cold response to his opinion.

『I can sympathize with the part about her being put through a lot because of her father. No, empathize.』

I really can't feel anything but coldness from the First and Second's relationship.

When I carelessly asked just what had happened between them, the Second's emotions exploded out, and my mana went down the drain in large quantities, so I decided not to bring it up again.

After that, a while of silence ensued.

A while after our conversation had been cut off, I finished reading my book, so I placed it up on the mountainous stack of books.

I had read all of the ones in the pile.

Looking at its height, it's about the right time for me to return home.

"I'm going to return, but what about you?"

In order to return them to their original places, I stood, and took them in my hands.

Aria hadn't finished reading yet, so she took a quick glance at me before, turning her head to one side.

"I'm not done here, so you can go ahead. Tell Novem that, um… I'll be late."

I received her message, before putting away the books, and exiting the room.

❼

The Guild was as busy as ever.

Even if we were on break, there are still adventurers normally completing their work. I left the reference room, and passed by the receptions desks on the second floor to see today's lines.

As always, only Hawkins' was short.

(He does his work neatly, and he's a nice person, though.)

Brown skin, and close-cropped red hair. On top of that, his armor of muscle was clearly visible from over his shirt.

His body was also large, and he looked out of the league of any of those standard adventurers out there.

In truth, quite a number of veteran adventurers refer to the man as『Boss』out of endearment. Or perhaps because they knew they couldn't oppose him

From their behaviors, it was apparent that the newcomers were too scared to approach.

Even when he handled people politely with a smile, the newcomers drifted away.

In comparison, the beauty's line was as amazing as ever.

A majority of the ones lined there were young men.

Some of them were lured in by her looks, and others wanted to impress her with the dangerous jobs they were going to undertake.

The Second gave a sigh of disappointment.

『Why do they go through such pointless effort. From her attitude, you can tell she's likely got a man or two.』

I can't really say anything due to my general disinterest in love affairs, but with that appearance, she does probably have a male attending to her.

From what I can see, she's in her later teens, I guess?

If you think about marriageable age, it doesn't sound strange if she were already taken.

(No, the commoners had a different age standard for that.)

The Noble age of marriage is said to be early, so I recalled that

normal women generally married later.

I've even heard that through advances in healing magic, the average lifespan of humans is increasing. Because of that, the average age of marriage is also getting later and later, or so I read in a book.

And so…

『Wait, is it too late for her if she's not married at that age She's probably got quite a few problems to her, that one.』

On the Second's harsh evaluation, the Seventh responded.

『Isn't that age normal in these times? I mean, the times have changed.』

Having come from an era more recent, the Seventh said there were no problems if the beautiful receptionist wasn't married off yet.

In truth, there was a gap of over one hundred years between the Second and Seventh.

Their sense of values were quite different.

Growing tired of absentmindedly staring at the desks, I started off towards the stairs.

There, I saw a party of three ascending it.

The mixed-gender party had two men with a sword and spear. They were probably the front line.

And they had a robed magician carrying a staff. It was a party with good balance.

Ah, I should throw in, 'For a party of three, that is.'

They had been ascending lined up alongside each other, so I pushed myself to one side.

"Oh, sorry. I was so caught up in the conversation, I didn't notice."

The man with a sword hanging at his waist was a little older than me.

Looking at the hilt, I could tell the weapon was well-used, and his standing figure and walk hinted that his skills were also high.

Similarily, the tall man holding a spear seemed to have quite a bit of strength.

“Be careful there. If you keep flirting like that, you’ll run into and bother people. Sorry there… wait…”

The man with the spear looked at my face, and seemed a little troubled.

There, the woman with the staff shouted out.

“You’re Lyle, aren’t you!? With that blue hair and eyes, there’s no mistake. You’re『Idiotic Noble Son Lyle』, aren’t you!”

Hearing that, my eyes turned doubtful.

I heart a laughing voice from the Jewel.

It was the First.

『Gahahaha, it looks like your plan was a complete success! Why not rejoice, Lyle!』

Thinking he should really consider my feelins a little more, I nodded.

The swordsman covered the woman’s mouth, and offered an apology.

“What do you think you’re saying! I-I apologize. She’s not a bad person, but her lips are a little bit loose, or how should I put it… sorry.”

I told him I really didn’t mind, as I accepted his apology.

“You should really think before opening your mouth.”

The spearman also seemed a little fed up with her.

“I-I mean… I’m sorry.”

It was a party of people that seemed to be two or three years older than me.

Perhaps because they had built up a considerable amount of experience, they had an atmosphere unlike the other young adventurers.

“I’m【Rondo】. The one there with the staff is【Rachel】, and the one with the spear is【Rahu】. Nice to meet you.”

They gave an introduction, so I also offered my name.

“I’m Lyle. I hope we get along.”

As I said that, the spear wielding Rahu-san put his hand to his chin, and looked over me. He inspected me from head to two, and smiled.

“Your impression is completely different from the rumors. It looks like you have some skill on you.”

Hearing that, Rondo-san folded his arms, and nodded.

“Certainly. That being the case, does that make the rumors baseless? Oh, right, we also had a job. Sorry, but we’ll be parting here. It would be nice if we could have a nice talk sometime later.”

The three of them headed off to the desks, and in the end, Rachel gave me a slight wave.

“Later.”

It doesn’t look like they’re bad people. Adventurers carry a strong ruffian image, but it looks like diligent adventurers do exist.

The Third gave his evaluation from the conversation.

『It’s nice they didn’t swallow the rumors whole. Well, it means there are some people out there who’ll evaluate you with their own eyes, Lyle. Good for you.』

(No, I was moving just as you guys said, and got the『Idiotic Nobel Son』title per your words… not that it matters.)

Ocassionally, there are some adventurers who turned mocking eyes on me, but there are also people like Hawkins-san and that Rondo-san from before out there.

When I think of that, my thoughts get slightly lighter.

❼

“I’m back.”

As I returned to the house, Novem appeared from the kitchen to greet me.

“Welcome home, Lyle-sama. Ah, so Aria is coming back separately?”

By the apron she was wearing, she was probably preparing lunch.

As I told her that ria would be late, my stomach began to grumble from the smells wafting in from the kitchen.

“She said that it would take her some time, so she would be late. That aside, this’s quite a nice smell.”

I looked towards the kitchen, and Novem laughed to herself, as she said lunch would be done soon enough, and returned.

While I wondered what it would be, the Fourth gave me a severe assessment.

『… Lyle.』

Since novem wasn’t close by, I answered in a quiet voice.

“What is it?”

『That was absolutely no good. I was going to try keeping quiet, but that was simply too horrendous. Why did you leave Aria-chan behind? And where are your thanks for Novem-chan making lunch? Just be a little more mindful of yourself! Simply looking at you is irritating me!』

Lately, I’ve been able to feel that this man probably went through many hardships for his wife.

Perhaps if he didn’t do this much, something terrible would have

happened to him.

“He’s saying that, but what’s your take on the matter, Fifth?”

As I asked, the Fifth gave a condescending reply.

『Don’t mind it. Pops(The Fourth Generation) has a bit of an illness. He cherished mama too much, and gave her a princess’s treatment… because of that, I also went through hell.』

Each generation had various problems.

As I went off to wash my hands, I heard Novem’s voice along the way.

“Lyle-sama, were you able to make up with Aria-chan?”

By her question, it seems she was worried about mine and Aria’s relationship. At the same time, I get the feeling I know why Aria was in the reference room today.

“No. But we were able to talk a little. I’m sorry to be worrying you about it, Novem.”

As I said that, she gave a wry smile.

“So you figured it out?

“Of course I’d understand if she suddenly struck up a conversation with me like that. I knew that something had happened.”

Novem removed her apron, folded it, and placed it on a nearby shelf.

“I think Aria-san has her share of troubles as well, so please pay some mind to that.”

I averted my eyes from her, nodded, and immediately went off to wash my hands.

❼

… At the guild’s reception desk, the work for the day had finished, so Hawkins stretched his body.

“Looks like today ended safely.”

The middle aged woman working next to him patted her shoulders as she answered.

“Finally. I wonder why they all come around to me. Still, it looks like they’ve started to line up with you as of late.”

“I think it would be fine if a few more came to me, but it’s not going as I had hoped.”

The woman who praised Hawkins smiled, and stood up before beginning her preparations to leave.

The beauty on the far side had left early, so she wasn’t there anymore.

Perhaps she was being treated to a meal by some adventurer. Hawkins sighed as the thought crossed his mind. He started to tidy up the documents and tools at his station.

Once work ended, cleaning up his desk… his counter… was Hawkins’ standard procedure.

The staff member who had taken over from the beauty had been troubled upon inheriting all the work that hadn’t been processed yet, it seems.

Hawkins called out to them.

“What’s the problem?”

“Ah, Hawkins-san… the truth is, that some documents I never heard about popped up when I took over the post. It’s a little troubling.”

“Again, is it?”

With a good face and figure, she was the reception desk’s eyecatcher. It would be accurate to put it like that, but in truth, there was a problem with her work ethic.

To the adventurers lined up gunning for her, a small problem or two would actually create a chance for a longer conversation with her. It was something to celebrate.

But from the point of view of the other receptionists, she was nothing but trouble.

Of all else, the girl's father was a higher up in the guild.

Hawkins was also told by his boss to look out for her, so if a problem cropped up, he'd lend a hand if possible.

But it seems that such an environment was a bad influence on her.

"I was sure I told her to hand over her post properly."

"You're not at fault, Hawkins-san. The other staff members just tell her something like, 'this much is fine,' and try to console her. The individual herself seems to think it's fine as well."

Recently, she had started to hate how Hawkins gave out detailed instructions pertaining to work. She stopped coming to talk to him very often.

The middle aged female worked hated the beauty from the start, or perhaps she didn't have any intentions of looking after her.

"The troubled ones should be the adventurers, but… anyways, what sort of documents are they?"

Saying that, Hawkins accepted the documents. His eyes suddenly turned serious.

"I'm sorry, I'm a temp, so I wasn't able to understand the meaning behind them."

Normally, one of the ones working out back would take over for the receptionists.

Even if they could handle a majority of the work, there were many things they didn't know. At times like that, Hawkins or one of the others gave a followup.

If it was this form, she should have been able to process it by herself. Thinking that, Hawkins became a little anxious.

"… Where did you find this document?"

“It was with the other documents I received upon taking post.”

The temp opened a drawer, and took out a cluttered binder with numerous documents shoved into it.

(It looks like she forcefully shoved them in again… I’m sure I taught her to handle documents with care, though.)

Letting out a sigh, Hawkins began to check and see if any of the other forms had any problems.

“I’ll check all of the documents within here. Also, can I ask you to check and see if any of out management are still around?”

“Y-yes!”

Noticing that Hawkins’s attitude had changed, the staff member ran off.

Sitting down in the chair, Hawkins took out all the relevant papers from the drawer.

“… Come to think of it, I haven’t received a report that they had returned yet.”

The advisor man who had called out to Zelphy came up in his mind.

He wasn’t the ones who had processed their forms himself, so he hadn’t heard the time interval of their departure. But his instincts were telling him it wasn’t strange if they had returned by now.

It’s not like Hawkins manned the desk every day.

At times, he would take a break, and have another staff member take up his post.

A bad premonition in mind, he started going at the documents.

“… So those sorts of premonitions can be on the mark sometimes.”

There, was a form listing out an overdue return.

They hadn’t returned, or perhaps they were put in a situation where they couldn’t. Hawkins immediately circled around to the back rooms

of the guild, and searched for the other copies of the guild cards kept there.

For the advisor, and the five young adventurers who were following him, he searched for the six cards.

While they were checked in times of emergency, the guild card copies were usually kept where they wouldn't see the light of day.

But it was just as he thought.

As he took the six cards in hand, he confirmed the names.

"There's no doubt about it."

With a stern expression, he gripped the card that had a dark horizontal line extending over the name…

7 - Comrade

Morning as usual.

The only difference was that from the time I fought Aria, this was the first we would be leaving the city to fight monsters.

I replaced my sabres again, and the weapons storekeeper was quite amazed when I showed up ordering the same thing again.

He even recommended me to go to Centralle, and purchase a better one, or to change my weapon preferences.

Rather than being fixated on the sabre, it was the weapon I had become used to handling, so I think I'll go with them for a while.

We met up with Zelphy-san and headed to the guild to find it in quite an uproar.

A large bulletin board with the words 'Emergency Request' was posted near the desks on the second floor.

A majority of the adventurers had their eyes turned towards it, but after making bitter faces, they headed towards the same boards they always checked for normal requests.

"I wonder what happened."

As Novem said that, we also ended up checking it out of curiosity.

Aria also seemed interested, but Zelphy-san's expression wasn't soft.

The request we found when we went up to the bulletin was for the search for a party that hadn't returned over their stated duration, and an investigation of the land.

"Ah, if you don't return by your set date, a search party goes out, right"

I recalled what Zelphy-san had told me, and she nodded. But looking

at the names written over the paperwork, she began to shake her head.

“You’re half right. I taught you our official stance, but in truth, it’s more of an investigation into why the party in question vanished. ”Criminals and monsters, or perhaps a labyrinth. There are as many reasons out there as you can think of. It’s to make sure the next ones who take their path don’t fall prey to it.”

Half right.

The intention wasn’t to save them, but to investigate why they had exceeded their duration.

If you wanted to rephrase it, sending aid to the lost party was the second priority.

Novem looked at the request formed, confirmed the party members’ ages, and seemed to have noticed something.

“Did these people perhaps hire a guild advisor?”

Zelphy-san silently nodded, before letting out some toxic words.

“That’s why I told him. That he should just go retire already… after coming this far, there’s no point if you die, is there.”

One of the names on the form had a red line running through it.

That was a sign that the one whose name had been carved on the guild card had received injuries leading to the ceasing of prolonged life activity.

… So summarize, death.

Perhaps out of luck, or because they were covered for… the five young adventurers seemed to be alive.

“H-hey… someone’s going to go save them, right?”

Aria said that and looked around, but while the adventurers passed their eyes over the emergency request, they didn’t seem to have the intentions of accepting it.

“… The veteran adventurer that died was a strong one among those in Dalien. While it may be a town of newbies, he would’ve been considered relatively strong even within the main force. A man like that has died.”

… To put it shortly, it would be difficult.

Dalien had an abundance of odd jobs to be found, but the feudal lord himself took the initiative to subjugate dangerous monsters and clear labyrinths.

While it may be convenient for those that had just joined the trade, there was some dissatisfaction to be had once they graduated from newbie status.

Should I put it as their focus on local interest? Of course, there are some that continue to work in Dalien as adventurers, but a large majority of them leave, and head for a town or city more suited for them.

“This is bad. The guild was just requiting skilled adventurers for the labyrinth that manifested not too long ago. The feudal lords troops have yet to return either.”

A labyrinth emerged, and the guild solicited help in subjugating it.

For that sake, a majority of battle-oriented parties had ventured off from the city.

(Come to think of it, I did hear something like that.)

Remembering the rumors I heard circulating around the guild, I looked around

It’s probably not that there wasn’t a single skilled adventurer here. But since they’re trying to recruit people for the request in this fashion, I guess there wasn’t any that could take on the job.

“… I heard that if you take on an emergency dispatch, the guild puts out quite a reward as well.”

Novem seemed surprised that none of the other adventurers wanted to participate.

There, Zelphy-san spoke.

“Survival over loot. There may be some out there who’ll take the challenge to raise their names, but… this is troublesome. The place they headed was a dangerous one. If played poorly, whole parties can get annihilated.”

It’s not like the entire landmass of Dalien was safe.

For places outside of human inhabitation, there isn’t much of an opportunity for soldiers to head forth and suppress dangerous elements.

As we were looking at the request form close the counter, Hawkins-san called out to use.

“Zelphy-san, can I have a little of your time?”

“… Boss.”

Hawkins-san was letting off a sterner atmosphere than usual, as he called Zelphy-san over.

“Did you see the request?”

“Yep, saw it. But from the contents, I get the feelin’ it should have been posted up quite a while ago. Did somethin’ happen?”

It was much too far past the point where it would be strange if they hadn’t returned.

Even so, today was the first time the urgent request hade made an appearance.

“… It was a blunder on our side. I deeply apologize.”

“An apology doesn’t clear up the matter, though. It probably wasn’t your slip up, boss, but we’re all putting our lives on the line here. Has anyone set out the request’s location yet?”

Permission to head off to the designated point hadn’t been granted yet.

But since the news came late, there may have been adventurers

who had set out for the dangerous area unaware.

“Perhaps our luck was good this time. The parties that usually used the area as their hunting ground have headed off to the labyrinth. It’s just that, that being the case, we can’t find any adventurers willing to head over.”

“Wouldn’t it be fine if you went, boss?”

On Zelphy-san’s joke, Hawkins-san didn’t really return an answer.

(Both of them are a little angry.)

From what I can hear from their conversation, it might have been an acquaintance.

“Um, Hawkins-san. So what was the reason you called Zelphy-san over then?”

Novem sought confirmation, and Hawkins-san started apologizing to us.

“It’s an urgent dispatch from the guild. We might be temporarily borrowing Zelphy-san. For that time period, the guild will personally cover the expenses.”

It doesn’t look like he’s counting us in as a plausible fighting force.

(But that may be natural.)

As I thought that, I heard the Second’s voice.

『Do the measures taken by the guild in times like these change by the city? From what I remember, I get the feeling I heard of them forcefully sending out people against their wills.』

The one who answered was the Sixth.

『The times change, and the guilds structure changes with it, but… Dalien’s adventurers aren’t of the best quality, so perhaps this sort of thing happens often.』

The ancestors sounded quite calm.

It’s not like there’s a need to panic, but I feel their reactions are a little too dry.

Zelphy-san was making a reluctant face, but she sighed and nodded.

“If it’s a request from boss, I can’t really decline. It’s just that I also want to know what sort of actions the guild is taking on it.”

Hawkins-san closed his eyes, and after a while of silence, he opened them and answered.

“The opinion of the higher-ups is… it was the mistake of a staff member, but they concluded that it was something that could happen to the best of us. In this instance, I doubt any punishment sil be handed down.”

“… Boss, in that case, none of us’ll be satisfied. I hated that man for his mouth, but there are plenty of adventurers who’ve been saved by him. While I loathed him, he’s helped me out twice or thrice. Are you tellin’ me to accept this?”

The talks seem to have started down a different direction.

The three of us were being left behind.

“Zelphy-san is dropping out of our party to fulfill an urgent request, it seems. In that case, what should we do today?”

I began to ponder today’s plans.

Odd jobs were fine, but since we had a party of three, I wanted to go out to fight monsters if possible.

I wanted to experience Growth soon, and more importantly, I’ll becoming needlessly specialized at physical labor at this rate.

(I mean, they’ve even started trying to lure me over.)

The site foreman offered that I quite being an adventurer, and come work for him. I had to give a bitter smile, and refuse.

It’s not that I hated it, but the earnings from it wouldn’t support two, so it wasn’t plausible.

Aria looked at Zelphy as she spoke.

“I wonder if Zelphy will be fine. I mean, a skilled adventurer of Dalien perished, right?”

Novem tried to calm her down.

“It may not have been a monster or foe. It’s not unthinkable that it was an accident. I also doubt that they’ll be sending Zelphy-san out alone.”

There was a party of six, one died, and the rest were missing in action.

The possibility it was an accident was actually quite high.

As I thought that, the First called out to me.

『Lyle, you participate as well.』

What’s this, all of a sudden? I thought, but the First probably had his reasons.

The Third was of the same opinion.

『Perhaps that’s for the best. And wait, in a request like this, the efficiency will generally rise if Lyle joins in.』

The Sixth also agreed.

『If it’s mine and the old man’s (Fifth Generation) Skills, then finding them will be simple, and you’ll be able to avoid danger.』

(I see. So if I use the ancestors’ Skills, the efficiency will be on another level.)

Especially the Fifth and Sixth. When used together, they were quite an amazing one.

I can put up a map of my surroundings in my head, and enemy and ally… monster locations and traps can be known to me for a certain extent of distance.

But if I said I wanted to participate, would Hawkins-san accept that?

The Second was the same as me.

『If Lyle said he wanted to join, would they permit it?』

The Fifth…

『What are the merits of him going out for that? They're a group completely irrelevant to Lyle. Also, if he starts making himself stand out, then the reputation we worked so hard to lower in Dalien would be pointless.』

After hearing all their opinions, the First spoke.

『Merits? Like hell I know. It's just that if he sees them off, and the adventurer called Zelphy dies, he'll have trouble sleeping at night.』

The Seventh let out a fed up response.

『Could it be this is for that Aria's sake again? I doubt there's a need to go that far. If she died here, that means that was the extent of her ability.』

The Fourth put a close on the disjointed opinions, and posed a question to me.

『Well then, like that, the opinions on the matter are divided… Lyle, what do you want to do?』

Having been asked for my opinion, I promptly put my hand on the Jewel-turned-necklace.

There really isn't much merit in it, but if the First is saying this much about it, the perhaps it really is that dangerous.

His sharpness of instinct is something I recognize.

(Am I really able to resolve this problem?)

If I used my Skills, the chances of success would certainly improve.

That's just how useful the Skills I held were.

But in order to participate, I have a need to persuade them. Hawkins-san and Zelphy-san. I'll have to let Novem and Aria stay

behind as well.

After thinking for a while, I came to my conclusion.

“Novem, can you wait with Aria in Dalien for a while? I think I’ll take up the urgent request with Zelphy-san.”

❼

『Oy, get a grip on yourself…』
『Not happening. After you did so much posing, for you to be thrown in this situation…』
『You even left the convincing to Novem-chan… Lyle…』
『There must have been a slightly better way out there. I mean, how could you draw back there?』
『It looks like there’s a need for you to steadily build up your negotiation skills.』
『Well, with all things taken into account, I guess that’s just how it goes.』
『You guys… that’s all you have to say to my grandson!? Lyle was trying his hardest! He opposed Novem’s participation up until the end of it, and in the end, he’s still right here participating in the urgent request, isn’t he!?』

(Stop it! Please don’t stick up for me any more than that, Grandfather(Seventh Generation)!!)

On top of the horse-drawn cart, I used both hands to cover my face. It had turned red all the way up to my ears, as I listened in on the Jewel’s remarks, First Generation up.

I’ve gradually become aware of it, but even if I cover my ears, I can still hear their voices quite clearly.

From how the surroundings couldn’t hear them, I had a hunch they weren’t operating by sond, but… it’s really a bother.

The ancestors’ voices I could hear even if I blocked up my ears…

The reason they were somplaining so much was because of the

current situation.

The guild sent out two carts, and they provided money for the necessary equipment. We were put in a temporary party, and sent off to investigate.

Starting with Zelphy-san it was my same old party. Novem and Aria included.

On top of that, Rondo-san's three were included in today's members.

The guild also hired a single coachman.

"O-oy, are you alright, Lyle-kun?"

Rondo-san called out to me in worry, and Novem, who was sitting next to me, also sounded worried.

"Lyle-sama, could it be a cold? You were fine until just now."

In comparison to Novem's flustered state, Aria seemed extremely nervous. She tightly gripped the red gem over her chest.

To her, Rachel-san started up a conversation.

"That's one of those gems with Skills in it, right? A rare find in these times. How many do you have in it?"

"U-um, mine included, there are five."

As Aria nervously gave an answer, Rachel-san's eyes began to sparkle.

"Amazing! If you made is a Magic Item, it'd fetch a price of one to two hundred gold coins. Since it's red, it's Vanguard Class, right? Is the compatibility alright?"

Skill compatibility is an important factor.

If you look at the Skills in my possession, the Fifth's and Sixth's become something quite amazing when used simultaneously.

But it's not like the gem was set to make these sorts of

combinations.

For those that it was passed down through, it recorded their Skills without discrimination.

“I’m sorry. I don’t really know…”

As Aria seemed apologetic, Rachel-san hurriedly tried to console her.

“D-don’t mind it! I’ve heard that people with gems can’t choose the Skills in them. Even so, if you have five on you, then you have quite a bit of fighting potential there.”

Having been told that, Aria hung her head down even further.

“… I can’t use them all yet.”

Hearing that, the spear weilder, Rahu-san let out a sigh.

“Read the mood, Rachel. That aside, your party’s the inverse of ours. It’s quite a pain if you have more men on you. For me, Rondo and Rachel let off a pink aura, so I’m left feeling lonely on the side… So, which one’s your girlfriend, Lyle? I’m pretty sure it’s Novem-chan, though.”

It was a time-consuming trip, so Rahu-san tried changing to a topic to ease our mental tension.

(I-I’m thankful. Rather than hearing the ancestors’ persistant rants, a conversation like this is…)

As I thought that, Novem spoke up.

“No, both of us are Lyle-sama’s…”

“Novem!!”

I hurried to cut her off, but I didn’t make it in time. Aria’s downcast face also turned red.

Rachel…

“Eh? That’s a joke, right, Aria-chan?”

There, Aria…

“He returned my heirloom for me, and when I was about to be disposed of, he went as far as to help me… and…”

“Say is clearly! You’re inviting in plenty a misunderstanding, so you have to be clear at times like these!”

I hurriedly turned to Aria, but that liberated Novem’s mouth.

“It is no misunderstanding. Aria-san received salvation from Lyle-sama, and right now, the three of us are living under the same roof.”

Novem said that with a smile, and Rondo-san had a cramped smile as he confirmed it.

“Eh, so this a so-called harem-like occurrence?”

Novem, quite clearly…

“It’s no so-called harem, it’s a true harem. For now, we only have two, but from here on, I expect the numbers will expand considerably.”

Seeing Novem let all that out with a bright smile, I opened and closed my mouth in silence.

I doubt she was unable to read the mood, but there’s no doubt she’s being completely serious here.

Rahu-san placed his hand on my shoulder.

While his mouth was definitely curved into a smile, his eyes were smiling by no means.

Similarily, the shoulder on my other side received Rondo-san’s hand.

“How about you go a little into the details, Lyle.”

Rondo-san was the same.

“How enviable that sounds, Lyle-kun. I definitely want to hear just how you brought that to fruition, but before that, I think I need to have a little talk with you on how a man must treasure the woman he

loves most.”

Rahu-san coincided.

“That’s right. It wasn’t a good idea for me to have started thinking of how to kill time until we arrived. I’m definitely giving you an earful, so prepare yourself, Lyle.”

Novem continued to go on about her future harem expansion plans with a smile, and Aria and Rachel-san listened on with reddened faces…

It looks like there isn’t a single savior on this cart.

❼

… Zelphy-san, who was driving the cart, heard the voices of young adventurers from behind her.

She did try shouting at Lyle’s group after they had suddenly stated their desires to take up the urgent request, but having been persuaded by Novem, she finally voiced her consent.

What’s more, she couldn’t offer Aria any special treatment, so the girl was going to be participating as well.

If it was about competence, her personal strength was high.

And in this time, three other strong adventurers were also participating.

They probably wouldn’t fail through some reckless actions, but still, she was anxious.

“Good grief, what fun they’re having… this isn’t a picnic, you know.”

She heard the voices of kids enjoying themselves from behind, and remembered how the lines she voiced were directed at herself, some long time ago.

They were the words of the departed adventurer.

『Zelphy-chan, this isn't a picnic, so how about we calm down a little?』

He taunted her when she was nervous, it was only later that she realized he was trying to ease her.

He was wild, and his mouth wasn't the finest, but he was an adventurer good at looking after others.

Whenever they met at the guild, they would throw around insults, and they had held drinking contests against one another at the bar as well.

"Come to think of it, he lost his bet, so he owes me a drink."

Zelphy looked up at the sky, as she mourned the loss of her colleague, who had served many years alongside her as an adventurer of Dalien.

She really did mean it when she said he should have retired already.

It was a dangerous job. If you could get out of it, it's best to do so as soon as you can.

"Dammit, there's no point if you die. Weren't you the one that said that…"

Even if they were quick to fight whenever they met, Zelphy still recognized him as a comrade.

It was precisely because she recognized him, that…

"I'll definitely settle this."

Zelphy's eyes were giving off a sharp light…

8 - Humans and Demons are Equally Favored

Having arrived at the designated spot indicated by the request, we dismounted the cart, and looked around the area.

In Dalien's remote regions, most areas turned into dense forests.

Apparently, someone tried to raise a village here and there in the past, but because of monster attacks, these plans ended in failure.

Mysteriously, it was impossible to burn down the monster infested woods.

If you tried cutting them down, more vegetation would immediately grow to replace it.

For that reason, the speed of the forest's spread was also something amazing.

A large amount of researchers speculate that the reason for this lay with the monsters.

When monsters built up homes, their magic was sucked into the trees, and this led to rapid growth…

From those managing it, it truly was a troublesome phenomenon.

But the opinions of the First and Second Generation were different.

According to the First…

『If you made a village here, you'd be able to sell all the lumber you could dream of!』

The Second also…

『You could make a killing off the deforestation business. What a waste… back in my day, I lived after a certain someone had already cut down the monster-infested forest, so I wasn't able to do that.』

The views of a truly powerful generation.

The troublesome expanding forest problem was resolved within a single lifetime. Well, because of that, the Second lamented his loss of a source of income.

Unloading our luggage, we ended up going out on a survey of the area.

We left managing our baggage to the single coachman, and we divided into our party of four and Rondo-san's of three to rotate between protecting our belongings and scouting.

Zelphy-san issued orders to us.

"You don't know what sort of monster you'll find. No matter what happens, run, and head to the location I told you of before. Also, there are also some survivors, make sure you can issue treatment and food rations at a moment's notice."

Perhaps the coachman was used to this sort of thing, as he readily nodded.

Capable people to support parties like these weren't too popular of an occupational choice, but they were essential positions.

Usually, a party of six would have at least one of those sorts.

It was desirable to have two, if possible.

If you took on mercenary work, then supporters… logistic support, increased in numbers.

It was said that rather than the mercenaries fighting on the front lines, the ones providing support in the back were more numerous.

"Should we also get a supporter on us?"

As Rondo-san said that, Rahu-san shook his head.

"You're hiring a supporter for a party of three? Our profits'll drop. At least get four or five of us before you get one for the party, right?"

Zelphy-san offered the two a warning.

“Don’t lose focus. First, confirm the surroundings. Make sure you frequently rotate your lookout. If an unforeseen event happens, then think and act for yourselves. Got it?”

If you couldn’t protect your own life, it was unthinkable to be able to save another’s.

I got the feeling Zelphy-san said something like that at the beginning.

I turned to Novem and Aria.

“Are either of you tired?”

Novem shook her head, but Aria’s face looked pale.

Perhaps she was worn out from the swaying of the cart.

The Second gave me some advice.

『Have Aria rest. She’ll probably hate it, but persuade her to take up lookout after resting a while. If you just randomly throw something out like ‘if you don’t rest now, there won’t be a second chance,’ she’ll likely consent』

So eager that she was making a pointless effort. That was the current Aria.

After gripping the Jewel once, I tried persuading Aria.

But before that, the Third threw out his opinion.

『Oh, make sure you seek the leader’s orders first. Lyle, right now, Zelphy-san’s acting as this party’s leader.』

He has a point.

I looked at Zelphy-san. She was sending a worried glance at Aria.

(If you were that worried, then you should have taken custody of her yourself.)

I offered a suggestion.

“Zelphy-san, can we put Aria on break? At this rate, it will be a long time before we’ll be able to rest.”

“W-wait!”

Aria raised an unsatisfied voice and drew closer to me, but Novem raised her staff to stop her.

“The one who will decide is Zelphy-san.”

“S-still…”

To a vexed Aria, Zelphy-san spoke.

“It’s true that if you don’t get in some rest now, rotating the watch shift will be hard, I guess… Aria, go take a break. Don’t think I’m giving you the easy way out here. When the time comes, I’m putting you on lookout. Until then, make sure you rest up so you can carry out your job properly.”

The look in Zelphy-san’s eyes seemed to say that objections were not permitted.

Aria reluctantly consented.

(She surely thinks she was removed from the party because of her ineptitude.)

The cold was cold to her.

『At times like these, consoling her has no meaning. She arbitrarily locked herself into a mindset she built up for herself. Truly troublesome.』

On that opinion, the First shot back with a weaker attitude than usual.

『She’s still young, so there’s no helping it! Consider the long term here!』

The First was frankly in favor of the girl, but if I had my say in it…

(… I’m a year younger than Aria, you know…)

There were some things I was dissatisfied with.

❼

For an adventurer to fight monsters, the place with the highest efficiency was generally the forest.

Even if they go to the forest, it wasn't like they really enter it. They stay in wait somewhere around the entrance.

They prepared someone like me to lure them out and fought them as a group when they emerged.

They kept themselves fighting on unobstructed land and ambushed monsters that were lured out. Quite an efficient style of battle.

But as long as the bait wasn't proficient, then they may end up with casualties.

After heading to the forest, we started to search for the footsteps of the missing adventurers.

Nearby, there were traces that a cart had paid the area a visit recently.

There were the traces of a campfire, and we discovered an abandoned cart missing only its horses.

I used Skills to confirm the surrounding situation.

(… There aren't any monsters, or anyone else at that matter.)

As I confirmed the insides of the carriage from afar, I found traces that it was broken into.

"There don't seem to be any monsters."

Zelphy-san took a hard look at my face.

"What is it?"

"No, I was just thinking about possibilities here, but could it be that you possess a Skill? Support Class at that?"

During the bandit subjugation, I acted separately from her.

This was the first time I showed her my use of a Skill. What was more, I never declared I could do anything like that.

According to the Second:

『You're making it quite blatantly obvious. Well, it's not like you'll be hurt or anything if it gets out. Just affirm it here. Oh, make sure you make its effect out to be vague.』

Hearing that, I nodded.

"Yep, it sure is a Support Class Skill. It's quite convenient."

I wondered what was on Novem's mind when she heard that, but when I turned my eyes to her, she was remaining vigilant of the surroundings.

Zelphy-san simply whispered something like, 'That so?'

"Anyways, on to the cart investigations. And wait, there are traces of blood on the ground."

The three of us approached it, and there, a bloodstain remained.

Novem…

"Could it be bandits? They were raided here or something?"

Zelphy approached and squatted down, before shaking her head.

"No, there really is nothing in this area. There's an especially high density of monsters here, so settling here would be hard. Some time has passed since the blood was spilled, so I can't really say anything about it, but… it looks like the horses were attacked here."

There were bones lying around nearby.

The report from the guild said only the adviser had perished.

There was no saying no one died while we were on the way here, but perhaps they fled.

Zelphy-san simply looked around the area.

"There's no traces of a fight. What's more, the inside of the cart…

has been laid to waste quite terribly.”

Something had happened, and the barrels and wooden crates had been smashed. The contents were taken away.

Since they didn’t use a pick or pry and had to destroy them to this extent, the possibility of it being by human hands was low.

What was more, the monster materials were left alone.

If it were bandits, they would take and sell them off somewhere.

Rather than killing the horses, taking possession of them was more convenient, and they’d probably actually take the cart in its entirety.

“If it wasn’t infighting, then monsters seem to be the greatest possibility.”

We circled around to see if anything was left behind.

But we didn’t find anything.

“It seems they stayed put around here and repeated battles by approaching the forest. But if that’s the case, then rather than there having been a battle here, it looks like only the cart was assaulted.”

With her experience as the base, Zelphy-san assessed the scene.

But all of that was but a prediction.

We couldn’t deny the possibility of bandits being remarkably stupid.

Novem confirmed our plans hereafter.

“What are we going to do now? Should we return, or perhaps set foot into the forest?”

Zelphy-san thought for a little and checked the height of the sun.

“Let’s go check out the area close to the forest. And return to camp.”

To observe the forest from afar, we left the area.

But in the end, even if observed from here, there were no changes in

the forest.

Zelphy-san apparently had come here in the past to hunt often, but according to her, nothing had really changed.

Just that it had expanded a little more than before.

I used a Skill to check its contents, and I sensed something dreadful.

The Second…

『Lyle, tell them quickly… a labrinth has manifested.』

❼

Night.

I returned to the camp site, finished eating, and rested until my shift for watch was to come around.

Around me, Rondo-san and Rachel-san were lying asleep.

Generally, you didn't hear of too much of a separation of genders among adventurers.

And wait, there weren't too many parties out there who could prepare two separate tents to facilitate that.

If they had money, perhaps they would do something like that, but beginners and poor adventurers slept in the same tent regardless of male and female.

(It's my first time camping.)

Up until now, I had never ventured that far out to fight monsters.

Of course, that was probably because I was still thought of as lacking in the necessary abilities.

There, I heard the First's voice.

『Lyle, stay how you are, and listen. The ones sleeping beside you are adventurers. If you let out a sound, they'll likely wake up.』

The Third offered an explanation to me on the current situation.

『It's not strange for a labyrinth to manifest in a forest. More so, that's the standard. Forests and caves, and also abandoned mansions and forts, they store up mana and become labyrinths.』

In this case, the cause was probably that the entrance to the forest had become a labyrinth.

Using my Skills to peek further in, I was able to confirm passageway-like formations.

Perhaps because not too much time had passed since its birth, the labyrinth wasn't all too deep.

At a relatively close point, a treasure-filled place labelled 『Deepest Chamber』 appeared.

It was the biggest room, so my ancestors told me there was no doubt about it.

Zelphy-san seemed to be of the same opinion, and she was under the opinion that some trouble emerged after they had accidentally drifted into the labyrinth.

The Sixth…

『My Skill has no meaning if you're not close enough. With your current level, Lyle, from the outside of the labyrinth, you probably won't be able to distinguish friend from foe.』

I did check it from the outside, but I could only get a vague understanding of the insides.

It was as if a haze had been cast over it, and I couldn't get a clear grasp of it.

The Fifth also…

『My Skill's the same. From outside, that's the limit. Of course, for you, that is. Now it's about our opinion on the matter.』

In the end, the Fourth came forth as usual.

『According to the First, there's no doubt there's something 'bad' in there, it seems. Also, great enough to defeat a veteran adventurer… We're fine it if you want to enter, but I don't recommend you go all the way to the Deepest Chamber.』

Hearing that, I grasped the Jewel.

❼

Morning.

Thinking the labyrinth was clearly suspicious, we left the guard of the cart to Rahu-san.

We ended up with a party of me, Zelphy-san, Novem, Aria, Rondo-san, and Rachel-san to enter the labyrinth.

If we were left on guard duty, we wouldn't be able to rescue the adventurers who had become immobilized by something within.

What was more, there was an absolute necessity to take Novem, who specialized in healing.

In cases where we were immobilized by injury, we could count on her.

As a result, the skilled Rahu-san ended up house-sitting.

He seemed reluctant, but there wasn't another way. If we didn't return in the set time, Zelphy-san forced the idea onto him to return to Dalien immediately.

When we set foot into the labyrinth, it was different from a normal forest.

With passages made of lined up trees, it really became a maze.

The unnaturally lined up trunks, and the breadth of the walkway…

More than anything, the air felt heavy, and it became harder to breath. We could still breath normally, but it was stressful.

Rondo-san looked at me and tapped my shoulder.

“Get your breathing in order. If you take in that much air, you’ll wear yourself out. This is my second time in one, but you get used to it soon enough. Don’t worry.”

I nodded and steadied myself.

And I used my Skills.

Full Over.

Map.

Search.

I used the First’s, Fifth’s, and Sixth’s simultaneously.

My raised power from Full Over let me forcibly make use of the other two.

By doing that, I was able to get a clearer picture than when I tried it outside.

As a detailed map of the labyrinth floated up in my mind, I tried to perceive where monsters were waiting and where the adventurers were.

(I’m starting to think this, but combining the Fifth and Sixth’s Skills is almost a cowardly move.)

The staff-wielding Rachel-san chanted a spell

And the surroundings became brighter.

“Sorry, but if I’m doing it alone, I’ll need a rest in about two hours. Novem-chan, can I ask you to rotate with me along the way? It can just be for ten minutes.”

“Yes.”

The two magicians confirmed how they would be lighting the area.

Novem had a need to perform healing, but if Rachel-san didn’t get some rest in, her Mana wouldn’t last.

I told Zelphy-san.

“Go straight here and turn left before the dead end.”

Hearing that, she put her hand to her chin.

“Is that also the power of Skills?”

“Yes.”

I answered with confidence, so she nodded and proceeded forward.

“Rondo will take the front with me. Lyle, you give orders from the very back. Also, the two mages are to protect Lyle.”

It looks like I won’t be fighting on the front lines.

“Understood.”

Hearing that, the Second seemed to accept it.

『It’s because using Skills drains Mana. She probably plans on conserving your energy. And wait, here, you’re giving orders to people you’re used to, so there shouldn’t be a problem. Lyle, make sure you use the Skills periodically to keep a good idea of your surroundings. We’ll keep ourselves as quiet as we can.』

In that case, the ancestors will probably only speak up if the situation turns drastic.

Like that, I gave directions and made sure to avoid areas where monsters were loitering.

The fact that we could sense their positions put us at quite an advantage.

And we proceeded deeper, aiming for the room the adventurers were in.

(The fact that I’m getting a response from them means they’re still alive, it seems.)

We avoided attacks from behind and kept ourselves on favorable conditions whenever went into a fight.

And what I noticed in all that was the skill level of Zelphy-san and Rondo-san.

Zelphy-san used magic as she fought, bashed with her shield, and stabbed with her sword. She even sent enemies flying with magic, quite a versatile fighting style.

“Fly away!【Fire Shot】!”

She pushed back with her Shield, and from there, small orbs of fire were fired off simultaneously.

The output of each shot was small, but it seems they weren’t to damage a point, but to damage the whole.

(Is it a strengthened form of Fire Bullet? If it’s an original, it may even be a Skill.)

Within Rearguard Skills, there were some that acted as magic.

I heard the mana consumption and output were different, but I never thought Zelphy-san would be able to use something like that.

Novem spoke.

“Amazing, Zelphy-san. Is that an original magic?”

Zelphy-san answered, a little embarrassed.

“I just casted what came to my head. It’s just a Fire Bullet with a little change in shape. Terrible, right? But it’s quite user friendly.”

It seems it wasn’t a Skill.

“So you can use magic. You acted like it was something beyond you before.”

As I said that, she sheathed her sword.

“All I can use is that one back there and Fire Bullet. Even if that’s all I can do, it’s embarrassing to say that I can use magic.”

So if you could only use one or two spells, could you not name yourself as a magician?

Aria looked surprised.

“Could you use it back at the mansion? Then even a governmental position would be…”

Zelphy gave a bitter smile.

“It was after I became an adventurer. More importantly, I can’t recommend loiterin’ in a place like this for too long. That goes for people’s pasts as well.”

Rondo-san nodded.

Similarily, he was also amazing.

He only had a sword on him, but his sword skills were quite something.

Aria was looking at his blade.

“Is that a Magic Tool?”

Hearing that, Rondo-san nodded. After battle, he remained vigilant of his surroundings and got his breath in order. We were taking a slight rest.

We also had conversations like these.

Though in exchange, Novem or I had to keep watch. Right now, Novem was lighting the area in Rachel-san’s place.

“It’s an heirloom and my partner. It has three Skills in it, so even if I’m the one holding it, this is what you get. However, don’t be spreading this information around outside.”

Rondo-san said that as he winked in Aria’s direction, before he received a prompt staff to the shin from Rachel-san.

“Ow!”

“Don’t flirt right in front of your girlfriend. Look, your break’s over. Novem, let’s rotate. Thanks for all this.”

“No problem.”

Rachel-san glared at the swordsman before thanking Novem for letting her rest with a smile.

Novem also had a wry smile on her face.

Zelphy-san posed a question.

“Now then, about how much further?”

I confirmed the locations of the room.

If we defeated the troublesome monsters on the way there, it looked like we would be able to avoid any battles when we were making our escape.

In the deepest chamber, a large presence remained immobile.

And it seemed to be guarding whatever treasure laid in the room.

“If we turn there, we should already be at our destination.”

I pointed to the entranceway we could see from the passage, as I confirmed that five presences were indeed beyond it.

“Okay, let’s go.”

Zelphy-san hurried off towards it.

❼

Having reached the room, we checked the five that had collapsed there.

They were all covered in blood, but they still had breath.

However, they looked to be in quite a weakened state.

“They’re alive! They’re still alive!”

Rachel-san raised a delighted voice, as she immediately ran over to them with the light.

Of the five, a single one of them noticed our approach and opened

his eyes.

“Oy, what happened?”

Rondo-san ran over, took out his water flask, and slowly let the man who opened his eyes drink from it.

I also approached them and assessed their injuries.

“It’s mainly blunt force trauma. There are some broken bones.”

As I said that, Novem began her healing magic.

While their wounds would heal, it didn’t seem that the weakened five would rise.

After he calmed down from the water, the beaten down adventurer opened his mouth.

“B-because of us, our adviser was…”

Hearing that, Zelphy-san came closer. She appeared to be making sure she didn’t let any information slip by.

“We were able to handle the monsters around here, and… when we said we wanted to go further in, he refused. We wanted to become first class as soon as possible, so…”

Looking over the crying man, Zelphy-san clicked her tongue.

“That idiot… oy, what sort of enemy was it?”

She made a regretful face as she asked for the particulars on the culprit.

“An orc. It was emerald… It had a large cudgel on it.”

While it sounded a little hard for a beginner, it wasn’t an enemy that couldn’t be beaten with the right numbers.

For the boss of a small labyrinth like this, it was surprisingly standard.

But Zelphy-san didn’t seem satisfied with that answer.

“You’re telling me that bastard was done in by a nothing but a Orc!? You guys wanted the treasure to yourself so you…”
“Y-you’re wrong. It was just an orc, but we couldn’t even lay a hand on it… by the time he came to save us, we were already worn out… and he told us to run ahead.”

The adventure shed tears as he spoke, but those tears were few.

It seems he was trying his hardest to hold onto his consciousness.

Novem informed Zelphy-san that the treatment had finished.

“Everyone has been treated. But I’m not sure about their stamina.”

Zelphy-san stood and ordered us to shoulder them. But we noticed a change in our surroundings.

Aria spoke.

“Do you not hear something? I also feel some vibrations.”

Rondo-san pulled his sword.

“… It seems that it’s noticed us.”

I also heard a loud voice from the First within the Jewel.

『Lyle! Check your surroundings immediately! Also… a big one’s coming.』

I hurriedly activated the Skills and opened my eyes wide.

Novem noticed my attitude and called out. At the same time, perhaps sensing something, she held out her staff.

“Lyle-sama?”

I swallowed my spit and drew my sabre.

“… It’s coming. The innermost boss is coming all the way here.”

There wasn’t a single response from the deepest chamber. And the boss’s signal was gradually approaching us.

What was more…

“It’s fast.”

As I muttered that, Zelphy-san unsheathed her sword and took a stance.

“I’ve never heard of a boss leaving its room before! Wai, everyone stand down! Even if it’s a boss, it’s just an Orc.”

As if to cut off Zelphy-san, the worn out adventurer screamed.

“There’s no way that thing’s normal! None of our attacks had the slightest effect on it! Because of that, that man as well… that’s definitely no normal orc!”

The adventurer’s cry shocked us all.

Attacks didn’t work.

Or so he said.

“Just what’s that supposed to mean!?”

Right as Rachel-san shouted out, the entrance to the room was blown away, and a single monster showed itself.

Looking at it, I muttered.

“This is the first I’ve seen an orc, but… it’s much bigger than I thought, and is it not red?”

I think there was no helping me saying that.

Emerald skin and thick limbs. It had the image of an orc, equipped with nothing but a loincloth, but the orc standing before me was definitely red.

It wasn’t just the loincloth. Bristle grew from its arms and wrapped around its body like a pelt.

The hair on its head had grown long enough to cover its back.

The tusks protruding from its jaw were sharp, and its breathing was rough.

“Oy, oy, that looks nothing like a normal orc to me.”

Rondo offered a light quip, but his tone was definitely nervous.

Aria couldn't raise a word, it seems.

Zelphy-san immediately rushed to the front.

I looked at the weapon in the red orc's hand.

It looked like it was simply wielding a sword, but if a human were holding it, it would definitely be one of the largest variety.

Zelphy-san glared at the enemy.

"So you stole the bastard's weapon? Some courage you got there… I had a debt to him, and a drink to reclaim. I'll be defeating you to make it even."

I gripped the Jewel once.

If that monster's strength only went as far as its appearance, then I didn't think it would be impossible to defeat.

But I felt something ominous from it.

It wasn't on Celes' level, but it was a bizarre sensation, as if it had something special on it.

My answer came from the Second.

『It defeated an adventurer and experienced a 『Growth』. What's more, it looks like it's a 『Skill Carrier』. Good grief… the old man's (First Generation) intuition is ominously accurate about these sorts of things.』

The Seventh gave me a warning.

『Lyle, consider retreat as well. If it comes to it, don't hesitate to cut off those immobile five and prioritize the other surviving members.』

Correct.

He was quite correct.

I turned my eyes to the collapsed five adventurers behind me.

(If I leave them, they'll definitely all be killed. Also, will we even be able to get away?)

If I used a Skill, I'm certain that I alone could escape.

I knew. I knew, but I didn't want to have to choose that option.

The Seventh spoke.

『Lyle, there are times when you must become heartless. Otherwise, you'll end up losing much, much more.』

He saw through my worries.

As I hung my head, the First burst into laughter.

『Gahahaha, you all are underestimating the boy.』

(Founder?)

As I was struck with wonder, the First issued orders.

『This is your(the Second Generation) Skill's turn, is it not?』

As the First said that to the Second, I heard the click of a tongue.

I've heard that the Second's Skill only held meaning in conjunction with others'.

『… It's too fast, isn't it? I wanted to wait a little longer for Lyle's Growth.』

While I was being confused, the Fifth bursted in.

『That's all fine and dandy, but confirm the surroundings. There's such an irregular existence right here. I wonder how the rest will move.』

As I checked with Map, I saw red, luminous points coming towards us.

"Zelphy-san, Monsters are starting to gather."

Everyone reacted to my words.

They were probably certain that my Skill was a Support Class that

let me pick up detailed information on the surroundings.

“Well you’re quite the bringer of bad news today. How about a little pleasant notifications sometimes?”

I wasn’t exactly sure about how to react to Zelphy-san’s tired voice.

The Second seemed laid back.

『Well then, it’s about time I taught you mine.』

From my point of view, I never thought I would be being taught a Skill the moment before I had to use it where it counted.

I never thought I would be told to just go use it without the slightest bit of practice.

The First spoke to the Seventh.

『Looks like he can’t run anymore.』

『Ku, Lyle, do whatever you need to survive this. With the Second’s Skill, that may be possible.』

(No, even if you tell me something like that…)

As I thought that, the information on the Skill started flowing forth from the Jewel.

(This Skill is…)

I casted my eyes down in a daze, and Zelphy-san shouted towards me.

“Lyle, get a grip! If you don’t show some drive here, then when!? You’re the one who said you’d participate!”

The orc before me raised a roar.

After hanging my head, I raised it.

The one to notice my change was Novem.

“Lyle-sama?”

“… I guess it really doesn’t have any meaning when used alone. Still, I wish you had just told me about it earlier.”

I leisurely pointed my sabre at the orc.

Notes

- I think I’ll changing the utterances of dungeon to labyrinth. The word used is 迷宮 Meikyuu, which means labyrinth or maze, but it is used in a similar fashion to the term dungeon you would find in a game. As Labyrinth is a more direct translation, I’ll be using it for accuracy’s sake.

9 - The First Generation's Weapon

The Second's Skill was, to put it simply, the ability to give others the rights to use your own Skills.

The specifics get a little more complicated, but a simple explanation would be that allies within a certain range of me could use the Skills in my possession.

The First's Full Over.

The Fourth's Speed.

One that created a condition where others could use their Skills whenever they wanted… That was the Second's【All】.

It's just that, the mana I needed to expend to use it was considerably low.

I mean, it just let others use your own, and long as they weren't using anything, it was a very slight expenditure on my part.

But the Skills strongest characteristic was its ability to differentiate enemy and ally within a set range.

The space where the trees had lined themselves up, and made a room-like area.

The entranceway large enough for a person to pass had been blown away, an in the scattered chips of wood, stood the Boss that should have been in the【Deepest Chamber】.

Even as an orc, it had red skin, and its hair was thick. Its hair grew to mask its back.

The ogre-like orc swung around the large sword that had once belonged to the adventurer it killed.

When wielded by the beast, it simply seemed to be a normal sized

sword.

Perhaps trying to threaten me as I raised my sabre towards it, the monster let out a roar.

Around me were the comrades I challenged this labyrinth with. Novem, Aria, Zelphy-san, Rondo-san, Rachel-san… the five of them flinched for a moment upon hearing the war cry.

I mean, it was just that loud.

Now that the orc was in it, the room that had a bit ow width to it started to feel exceedingly narrow.

But I was able to comprehend the orc's current condition to some extent.

(I can see why the Seond hesitated to let my use it. In a sense, this is truly too powerful.)

To put it bluntly, its original effect of being a Skill to allow others the use of Skills… was a lesser power than its indirect effect.

As if they were summoned forth by the red orc's scream, the monsters loitering around the dungeon began to gather around the room we were in.

Zelphy-san stood up in front of me.

No, she was holding up her shield, so she was probably taking on the role of a Shield for the entire party.

It's just that in order to oppose this red orc, I don't think Zelphy-san's power is sufficient.

"I'll take on this red one. You guys take care of the other ones pouring into the room."

As I said that to all, Rondo-san raised his voice.

"Do you know what you're saying!? That enemy's not normal. It would be best if we all went at it at once!"

While that definitely was a plausible opinion, this wasn't the time to

be delaying action against the monster in front of us.

“Yeah, I’d love that too, but we don’t really have the time… look, they’re coming!”

As I said that, Goblins started to enter the room.

As they sprung up from behind the orc, Novem used her magic.

“Wind Bullet.”

The Goblins were sent sprawling in the air, and they collided with a wall.

At the same time, I pulled out my spare sabre, and started running off towards the red orc.

It lifted up the blade in its hands, and lowered it at me.

“It really is quite a Skill.”

Using my momentum, I leaned down and leapt. The falling blade pierced into the ground behind me.

I ended up in the space between the orc and its weapons.

Using the sabres in both of my hands, I cut at the red orc’s knees.

“Too shallow? More so that I thought… no.”

As I was considering whether the orc’s skin was harder than I had expected, I saw his knees healing before me.

I immediately jumped to his left, as his left fist hit the ground where I was, and gouged it out. A small crater was formed.

As I rolled to stand from my lunge, a voice called out to me.

“Lyle-kun!”

It was Rondo-san’s voice.

Seeing the goblin coming at me from my back, he quickly raised his voice.

Without turning around, I stuck my sabre behind, and stood.

Goblin blood starts raining down on my head.

“Ah, I can’t see.”

As I muttered that, a few reacted by rushing over to me.

It was Novem, Aria and Zelphy-san.

Also, seeing a good opportunity, the monsters around started to aim at me.

I swung my two swords, and turned as I moved around the room.

Every time I swung my swords, blood spattered onto the ground.

As I finally used my sleeve to wipe my eyes, I was able to confirm the situation.

“So even when blinded, I can do this much?”

Using my blades, I had dodged and cut down the monsters that came at me.

Where everyone was, and what sort of condition they were in… that was the Second’s Skill that could let me perceive all my surroundings. It differed from the Fifth and Sixth’s Skill in an essential point.

The Fifth spoke with some nostalgia.

『I was under this Skill’s care quite a bit, but as I thought, the side effect is the more amazing part of it. My Skill gives you a much larger view, and it’s not suited for these sorts of melee battles, though.』

The Sixth agreed.

『Right. It’s plain, but quite proficient. There were quite a few campaigns I lived through simply because I had the First and Second Generations’ skills.』

I’m sorry if you wanted to reminisce a little, but I’d really like some

advice on how to defeat the enemy in front of me right now.

“I heard that attacks don’t work, but it looks like it’s healing. If you continued attacking it, it’d eventually run out of Mana and collapse, but… it feels like my stamina will run out first.”

If it were only me, I think I would manage one way or another, but right now, I have comrades.

The first ones to collapse will probably be Rachel-san, who was keeping the room light, or Novem, who was using offensive magic to support me after having healed all the adventurers herself.

After that, Aria will probably fall, and then perhaps Zelphy-san.

Finally, maybe even Rondo-san won’t be able to defeat this orc.

(Because it defeated a veteran adventurer to experience a growth, it’s gotten even more troublesome. So monsters can grow, and get Skills as well… was the fact that it was a grace from god to man a lie?)

I lowered my eyes to the sabres in both of my hands, and retreated back. In front of me, the orc’s sword was lowered.

It looks like it doesn’t know how to handle a sword.

With this, it may have actually been better if it kept the cudgel.

“The chipping on the sabres is quite bad. My weapons will be ruined first. If I were to take it out in one blow, would magic strengthened by Skills be best?”

I tried to reach a conclusion in my mind, but I felt it wasn’t quite sufficient.

Since the others were taking on the monsters flooding into the room, it’ll take some time before I’ll be able to seek help from them.

Since it was taking me on, the red orc wasn’t attacking the others. If someone did come to my assistance, perhaps it would change its target.

“I really hate gambling, though… well then, how should I take it

out…”

With my strongest attack, I have to somehow take down this monster in one strike.

I need to determine what Skill it has, and I can perceive a majority of my surroundings with the Second’s Skill. Stamina and Mana… Since I can sense those sort of things intuitively now, my fighting style has to change to match that.

The First…

『Hey, isn’t your (The Second Generation) skill a bit too cowardly?』

The Second shouted out.

『The hell you mean by cowardly!? It’s a convenient Skill! It was so convenient that he might start relying on it, so I didn’t let Lyle use it yet is all!』

It felt like I had ganed some new senses, but it feels like using them all will take too much time.

I felt that not my Mana, but my mental fatigue would catch up to me.

I continued to dodge the red’s attacks, as I thought.

There, the red orc ominously retreated a step. It raised its voice, and from the room’s walls… the gaps between the trees, a normal emerald-skinned orc appeared.

“This one summoned allies!?”

Aria raised a surprised voice, and Rondo-san approached Rachel-san in order to protect her.

Zelphy-san also stood in front of Novem and Aria.

“Lyle, how long do we have to hold out!?”

Hearing Zelphy-san’s voice, I looked up, and thought for a moment.

“It will be over soon, so please withstand it for a little while.”

I said that.

Hearing my words, the First raised a loud laugh.

『nice going there, Lyle! Right. At times like these, men have got to look cool! Good! I'll teach you something special…』

On the First's remark, the Fifth seemed a little agitated.

『Oy, what are you thinking? It's much to soon, isn't it?』

For the two orcs that had appeared at the red ones sides, I temporarily activated Limit Vurst, and threw the sabres in my hands at them.

They spun in the air before landing in their skulls.

The two orcs opened their jaws at the impact, before collapsing on the ground.

Seeing me lose my weapons, the red orc roared.

"I wonder if I can take it out with magic… just barely, perhaps."

I think it was possible, but just barely. There was also the possibility it wasn't enough, so I'd have to bet it all on one hit.

(If I can't beat it then, I can try striking it barehanded, I guess.)

For a moment, I found it terribly strange for a First-like thought to be running across my mind.

(What is this feeling… it isn't bad.)

While I was thinking something like that, the First spoke.

『Oy, clench the Jewel.』

"What are you saying?"

Those around were busy fighting monsters, so they probably won't hear my conversation with the First.

『I'll teach you something fun. It'll be some good news for the current you… I mean, you'll be able to use the trick the Seventh personally went and set up.』

“The Seventh… my grandfather?”

I put using magic on hold, and gripped the Jewel as told.

The Seventh began yelling at the First.

『Why did you tell him!? It’s too soon! With Lyle’s Mana, he really will only be able to maintain it for a few seconds!』

The First shot back.

『Seconds? That’s more than enough, ain’t it!? You guys, to this one… who’s the one that said Lyle was amazing!? I approved of him! No one’s going to be getting in my way! Now let’s go, Lyle!』

The Jewel gave off a blue light, and the chain wrapped around my neck was arbitrarily undone.

The silver ornaments enveloping the stone started to cange shape in my hand.

“This is…”

It looks like the others were curious about my situation as well. With a blast of magic from Novem, the area was covered in smoke.

Feeling a weight like never before from the Jewel, the item that it once was… no, I gripped the silver ornaments I thought to be nothing bur accents to grace the Jwewl.

I gripped the handle in both hands, and the silver blade let off a pale light. A guard with the blue stone embedded in it… the Jewel shined.

『My sword skills are none too splendid. So these sorts of striking weapons are best for me.』

What my hands had grasped was a thick silver sword.

The First cried out.

『There’s no time, right!? On with it already!!』

As if the voice was pushing me forward, I dashed forward, and took a large jump. I turned my body to avoid the red orc’s lowering

sword, and used the weight of the large sword in my own hand to rotate from the momentum.

With the centrifugal force as my ally, I used my Skills to momentarily raise my power output to its limit.

『This is my final Skill… it's【Full Burst】!』

Perhaps through the First's support, as I activated the Skills, a power greater than usual surged up from within my body.

I took control of the spin, and lowered the maximized power onto the red orc's head.

"With this…"

My voice overlapped with his.

"It's the end!!"
『It's the end!!』

The orc tried to sacrifice its left arm to survive, but the arm it used as a Shield was cut clean through.

My blade pierced deep into the ground, and the caved in earth around the impact spoke to the blow's power.

"Hah… hah… how brutal."

After I confirmed the two parts of the orc's body slowly fall to the ground, the silver sword changed itself back to a simple ornament.

(He said the Seventh had it specialy made, but… come to think of it, Zell did say it had a rare metal put into it.)

Recalling the words Zell imparted onto me when I was driven out, I started to wish that they had just told me about it sooner.

But through a sudden depletion of Mana, I couldn't put any power into my body.

My knees hit the ground, and the one propping up my body… Novem was there.

“Lyle-sama!”

Novem clung to me, and perhaps out of her genuine worrt, she was squeezing quite strongly.

“Ahahaha, sorry… I pushed myself a little.”

Zelphy-san also ran over, and sought confirmation from me.

“Just what was it you did? And that glowing weapon… oy, wait! Don’t collapse in a place like this!”

Zelphy-san was quite rowdy, but that was the same as always, so I felt a little relieved. Nearby, I saw Rondo-san had been injured, but Rachel-san was busy treating him.

Aria looked to be out of breath, but she had used her Skills to defeat the monsters.

“Please quiet down! Lyle-sama, let’s get out of here quickly. Do you think your consciousness can hold on for that long?”

So we either took a short break here, or get out immediately.

But if I feel the same as always, it doesn’t look like I underwent a Growth.

I hated that.

I wanted to show some obstinacy.

“I’m fine. If I rest for a little, I’ll soon be able to stand… Novem, thank you.”

“Don’t worry about it.”

Novem seemed relieved, but she continued to support up my body. To Aria, who drew closer, I spoke.

“So you were able to win against monsters. Are you a little more confident, now?”

I tried teasing her a little, but she gave a surprised response.

“You… were watching?”

Perhaps she took it as praise, but she was unexpectedly happy.

(Aria, perhaps you're the type that gets fooled too easily. You should be careful… more importantly…)

I looked at Rondo's group.

"I'm sorry for arbitrarily taking action on my own."

Rachel-san let out a sigh. Rondo-san had his injuries wrapped with bandages, but he was smiling.

"That was amazing. I never thought you would be able to do that much. Idiotic Noble Son doesn't suit you, Lyle."

Looking at his unrelenting smile, I thought that perhaps he was quite a broadminded person. He directs a smile to the younger adventurer that went off on his own.

But Rachel-san was different.

"You're way too free-willed. It turned out fine this time, but just look at yourself. Be more conscious of the fact that you have people who'll weep for you if you died, and wait, I wanted to say this, but I didn't get the chance, so let me give you an honest apology here. Thank you."

I honestly didn't get the feeling that I was actually receiving thanks, but I guess she was showing consideration in her own way.

I smiled sarcastically.

Zelphy-san told me not to put up a front, and to worry about myself.

"We were saved because of you, Lyle, but please trust the others a little more. What they are and aren't capable of, if you had taken that into account, perhaps you could have moved more efficiently. I can understand your feelings of wanting to conceal your Skill, but please give out at least a little information on it."

Thinking about if that was really the case, I started considering whether or not to bring up the ancestors.

(First, I have to tell Novem. I have plenty of things I have to let her

know. Like about the First Generation…)

A Barbaric man who didn't worry about the details. Who moved on instinct, and stirred up his surroundings.

But he was the reliable founder of the Walt House.

(I wonder if he's recognized me.)

I gripped the Jewel as I thought that. Novem opened her eyes wide.

"The gem is shining… this is…"

As Novem said that, the others also gave a surprised reaction.

What floated up in my head was the name of a Skill.

"…【Experience】."

It wasn't just the name that came up.

Just what sort of things it could do, and how it could be used.

They all came to me at once.

Since it first manifested, it took quite a while for my Skill to take definite shape.

"Wait, that means… you, just how many Skills can you use?"

Aria was astonished, but more than that, it was the contents of the Skill that shocked me.

I mean, my Skill was Support Class, and it seems it was perpetually active.

I thought the reason I was getting fatigued so easily was because of the ancestors, but it seems that one of the contributing factors was my own incomplete Skill.

(A Skill that lets you obtain a lot of experience? … What's more, it's perpetually active, so that means it's constantly expending my Mana.)

When it was still incomplete, it looks like it didn't display its intended

effect, but it still drained up my Mana regardless.

And here, I finally was able to learn its effect, but…

(Isn't my Skill just a little to vague!!?)

❼

After the break.

We took three cycles to take the five injured adventurers out of the labyrinth.

The support person who was acting as our coachman filled our stomachs with the soup he prepared, and after that, we wandered over to the deepest chamber.

As long as the core… treasure remained in the deepest chamber, the labyrinth would continue to grow, and monsters would continue to emerge.

To avoid any further danger, collecting the treasure was a necessity.

As we entered the room, Rahu-san noticed a glowing metal stick in the space between trees.

"Isn't that is!?"

He ran ahead, and cut away the branches entwined around it, before taking it out.

As he did that, the harsh breathing conditions were suddenly resolved.

"With this, the labyrinth has been cleared. There was only one floor, so it was easy, but if it had grown to three or four, it would have been impossible with these numbers."

The metal in his hands looked like iron.

But it was a special iron that had been soaked in the magic of the dungeon.

“Ooooh! If you make this into a weapon, it becomes a Magic Tool you can grant Skills unto, right!”

Rahu-san sought confirmation of that fact from Zelphy-san in high spirits, and she nodded with a bitter smile on her face.

“If you bring it to a craftsman in Dalien, you could make a few with half of that, I think. But make sure you choose a guild certified dealer.”

It’s none too pleasant if these sorts of metals start flowing along the underground routes.

“Rahu, we’ll have to evenly divide the reward. Since there are seven of us, should we make seven parts?”

Rahu-san drew closer to Rondo-san.

“Can I buy off the other portions!? As long as we have this, then we’ll be able to carry Magic Tools as well. In that case, we can even start challenging other labyrinths as adventurers!”

Rahu looked to be in high spirits as he expressed his desire to turn the treasure in his hands into a Magic Tool. But looking at the amount of metal, the amount that could be made was around three to four items.

“We don’t have that sort of money. Let’s build it up steadily.”

Rondo-san let out a sigh.

With this amount, just how many gold coins would that take?

As I thought that, I noticed Zelphy-san’s eyes were pointed at a corner of the room.

I looked there as well.

“… He was an acquaintance, right?”

As Zelpht0san called out to her, she mumbled some affirming words.

“He was quite the willful bastard. After saying that death was the end of it so many times, in the end, he threw out his own life to save

some newcomers.”

Making acomplicated expression, she approached the veteran adventurer’s corpse, and began looking through his belongings.

She piled up everything that seemed to have value, and finally recovered his guild card.

From my point of view, it looked like roadside robbery.

“Hey, you guys come closer too.”

Hearing that, we… me, Novem and Aria, approached the corpse.

Perhaps because he was beaten to death with a blunt weapon, the body was in quite a bad state.

Novem held her hand to her mouth, and Aria’s face turned pale as she assumed a crouching position.

I covered my mouth.

“Remember this. The death of an adventurer is something like this. In the end, everything of value is picked off, and the corpse is cast away. Make sure you don’t forget to collect the guild card, and deliver it to the guild.”

An end stripped of all worth.

Saying that, Zelphy-san took out a leather bag she didn’t usually use, and she started carefully putting the veteran adventurer’s belongings in it.

“Zelphy, it’s not like you have to go that …”

Aria had a pale face and a shortness of breath, but Zelphy-san didn’t heed her words.

“This is my right. I ventured to a dangerous region, and confirmed the corpse. I even conducted an investigation into what exactly happened here. Where is the problem in that?”

As she glared at Aria, Zelphy-san seemed quite different from usual.

Rondo-san's group didn't say anything.

"Well then, the recovery has ended. Let's return, and get some well-deserved rest. Also big guy over there."

"Me?"

On Zelphy-san's words, Rahu-san pointed to himself. He was holding the precious metal under his arm.

"My portion's settled with this man's stuff. Go negotiate the rest with Lyle's group on your own. They're still newbies, so you may be able to cheat them out of it quite easily."

With those words, Zelphy-san turned to leave. Aria had a sad expression as she watched her back.

"Because of the things that happened in my House, Zelphy-san turned out like…"

Seeing the adventurer's form, Aria was sorrowful.

I looked after Novem, and handed Aria the water flask for her parched mouth.

If you die, you're thrown away. Those alive will take everything of value.

She showed us such a precedent.

"You two, it's about time we left."

As I said that, Aria looked over the corpse.

"At the very least, a burial…"

There, Rondo-san explained.

"In a short while, this labyrinth will wither away. Everything here will rot away, so whether you bury him or not, it will all be the same. Or could it be you plan on shouldering that corpse all the way out of here?"

Aria mournfully looked at the ground.

And Rondo-san continued.

“It’s better you treasure those feelings. They may be naïve, but before being adventurers, we are all human.”

Rondo-san left the area, and Rahu-san tailed behind him. His parting words…

“Let’s negotiate it out later. Oh, I don’t intend on cheating you guys, mind you. It’s just that we simply don’t have too much on is… sorry, that wasn’t something for me to say at a time like this. At this rate, I can’t scold Rachel for her loose tongue.”

It seemd he was going to use the opportunity to say something, but sensing it was impossible, he left the chamber.

I offered my hands to Novem and Aria, and supported them as we walked.

There, the Fourth…

『Flanked by two beauties…』

Spouted out some words filled with hatred. Hearing that, the Third laughed.

『You’ve got good luck, Lyle. That’s quite an important thing, you know.』

And the Sixth spoke.

『Hey, let’s be off now. That Zelphy just went through great pains to show you guys a taste of reality. Think about her feelings too.』

Hearing those words, I felt the urge to tilt my head.

(Zelphy-san’s feelings?)

The Second let out a sigh.

『Good grief… it seems she really intends to leave this Noble Lady to Lyle. She even put up those theatrics.』

The ancestors said that that display from before was an act, but I

wasn’t able to understand their meaning.

(Really intends to leave? What do you mean by that?)

Supporting the two of them, I headed towards the exit to the labyrinth.

10 - Lyle’s Growth

Inside the swaying cart, my body was tormented by immense physical fatigue.

My face is probably pale.

In truth, I focused myself on the outside scenery, as I thought of nothing but how much further there was to Dalien.

The unmaintained roads ended, and the shaking lessened, but the baggage cart still swayed violently.

It was make quite sturdy, and it was maintained by the guild, so it was probably well taken care of.

“I don’t really want to have to ride in a cart again…

Perhaps out of my tiredness, the return trip was less sparing than the way there.

The one who watched me in amazement was Aria.

All of us were quite fatigues, but among us, I was the worst case.

“Novem is using the main cart for healing purposes, so she left you to me… but you’re really making quite a face there. Please hold on, there isn’t much left to go.”

On her tone, I shot back.

Since I was quite fatigued, it wasn’t much of a tasteful response.

“You were even worse on the way there. You looked like you were going to throw up time and again.”

“T-that was because we were shaking way too much! I’m already used to it, so I’m fine, you hear!?”

Looking at her embarrassed face, the only healthy one among our members, Rahu-san smiled bitterly.

“You two sure get along.”

On his statement, mine and Aria’s replies overlapped.

“I don’t think we do.”
“We don’t!”

While envying Aria’s vigor, I lied down, and turned my eyes to Rondo-san, who was by Rachel-san’s side.

Even when her state wasn’t the best either, Rachel continued to direct worried eyes at him.

Seeing that, the Fourth began to nag…

『Lyle, like, you know, can’t you carry a little more dignity? You have to make sure to treat women well. And wait, if you displayed that attitude back there to Novem, you’d definitely be dragged to the conference room, and lynched.』

The Fourth, who was always loud about female relations, said as such, but right now, I really am tired. It’s a feeling of fatigue I’ve never felt before.
I can’t really muster up this dignity thing right now.

The driver of the luggage cart wasn’t Zelphy-san, but the support man.

Zelphy-san was tending to the carriage where the injured were loaded.

Novem was nursing the five, and despite her exhaustion, she was conducting herself firmly.

Rondo-san’s tired face bent into a smile.

“Perhaps… it’s coming.”

What is? As I thought that, the Second supplemented information.

『Lyle, before a Growth, fatigue, or perhaps a strange sensation can occasionally serge as as a premonition. Mainly when it’s after you gain a large amount of battle experience. At times like that, rather than experiencing a growth during normal life, the changes in the

body are greater, so you can feel it as an extreme tired feeling』

Meaning after coming here, the signs of 『Growth』 are finally starting to display themselves.

I want to be happy, I didn't have the mood for that.

Rahu-san was a little despondent.

"I wanted to join in. Then perhaps I would experience Growth as well… and wait, it's rare for everyone to be showing signs like this all at once."

More or less, it's natural for humans to show individual differences.

But all the members who participated in the battle were showing such tired symptoms.

Rondo looked quite drained, but he remained smiling. Thinking that he could experience a Growth, he was probably happy.

"When we return, we'll have to rest for a while then. And Lyle-kun's group did concede the reward to us, so I want to do something to compensate."

The labyrinth's deepest chamber…

The rare metal we found there, the iron soaked in magic was turned over to Rondo-san's group.

Zelphy-san took whatever valuable she found on the adventurer as her reward, and in exchange for the precious metal, we would be getting the full amount of the request reward.

For taking up the urgent request, and reporting the results of our investigation, it wouldn't be a small sum.

While we did think of melting down the metal into equipment, it didn't feel necessary for our current party.

I mean, both me and Aria had gems on us. Even if we had weapons that could grant skills onto us, there was a possibility the two would clash, and we wouldn't' be able to use them well.

Perhaps Aria would be able to if she got used to it, but for me, the Jewel was too strong that it was impossible in my current state.

I did mull over whether we should have a staff make for Novem, but she refused, so the talks proceeded in a direction where we would take the guild reward.

“Well… when this fatigue goes away, I’ll leave it to you.”

As I put all my might into giving an answer, Rondo-san smiled.

“Right.”

In comparison, Rahu-san seemed to be happily considering what sort of weapon he wanted, and what Skills to set into it.

(Are we there yet?)

I remained irritated in the swaying cart, and decided to stay lying down up until the destination.

Aria draped a blanket over me.

Unable to raise a thanks in reply, the Fourth clicked his tongue at me.

『Che!!』

❼

After arriving at Dalien, our group reported the details to the guild.

But there wasn’t a need for all of us to be there to talk, so after receiving the reward, my party was going to return to the house.

The leader this time around, Zelphy-san, was to stay, and give a detailed report.

On the guild’s second floor receptions desk, I borrowed Rahu-san’s shoulders, as we responded to some adventurers who called out upon seeing our return.

“So you took ‘em down? Good job, all of you!”

“Looks like the young’uns are givin’ their best as well.”
“Still, with this, I can finally be relieved.”

There were some that clapped their hands, and we got a taste of the feelings of war heroes making their triumphant return.

“This ain’t bad in itself. It’s Dalien’s good point, I guess.”

Rahu-san said that, and and I wondered if that meant the other guilds were different.

“The other places are different?”

“Yeah, it really depends on the pand. It’s temperament, or how should I put it, local colors… still, this feeling ain’t a bad one. If I could make it here, it’s a town I wouldn’t hate settling in.”

From his manner of speech, it seems he planned on leavin the town, sooner or later.

As I observed the surroundings, I found the usual faces manning the desks had changed.

The beautiful clerk wasn’t there.

The middle aged woman attendant was explaining various things to a young male hire.

(The atmosphere is a little strange. It’s like the younger adventurers have questionable looks on their faces.)

Zelphy-san handed over the dead adventurer’s card to Hawkins-san, before returning to us.

“It sure is lively. Well, in Dalien, I guess it’s a bit of a rare sight to be found… We’ll be dispersin’ here, but if your party can’t get over the fatigue, Lyle, then rest for a few days or so. As it is right now, it’ll be dangerous to send you out to work.”

I definitely didn’t want to do any work like this, so I nodded in response.

Novem was the same.

Only Aria-san hung her head without turning her eyes to see Zelphy-san.

Rondo-san gave Zelphy-san their gratitude.

“It was quite a nice experience. I mean, we survived, and all. If it suits you, call out to us whenever you want.”

To Rondo-san, who was eloquent despite his enervation, Zelphy-san nodded.

“Though I’d like it if you cut me some slack if something like this happens again. It’s just that I’ll commit you guys to memory.”

Hearing that, the three of them left the guild.

“Look, you guys should be off too. Your making some terrible faces there.”

With Rahu-san gone, I borrowed Novem’s shoulder to depart from the guild.

❼

… A private room in the guild.

Hawkins faced Zelphy, a table separating the two.

Perhaps due to Hawkins’ large build, the room seemed narrower, and the table smaller than normal.

“… Nice work. I’ll be reporting this matter to the higher ups in the guild as well.”

Having finished gathering the necessary information, Hawkins took the documents laid out on the table, and tapped their ends on the wood twice to align them nicely.

“I really am tired. There wasn’t any good part about it, and it ended with me showing them all my unclean sides. Please spare me from a second time.”

Hawkins-san gave a wry smile.

While Zelphy said she was taking the adventurer's treasures for her own, he had a general understanding of the situation.

"… Do you know where his house it?"

Hawkins asked if Zelphy knew his… the deceased adventurer's house.

"I know it. His family consists of his wife, and two children. It really is detestable… I don't really want to have to do this sort of thing too often."

Hearing that she even knew his family organization, Hawkins' expression turned a little sorrowful.

"So you're personally taking on your detestable role? What's more, while keeping silent to Lyle-kun and the others?"

"I'll properly do my advisor job. This matter is outside the scope my fees cover."

Hawkins could imagine what she was going to do with the items she took as her reward.

The valuables left behind by a dead adventurer did generally go to whoever went to investigate, or to his comrades.

But when it was quite a recognized adventurer that passed, the ones who were looked after by them would often leave them to the bereaved family.

"Then why not just tell them? It's important if you think about how they'll carry themselves from here on."

Perhaps unsatisfied with the idea, Zelphy averted her eyes.

"My job is to turn them into first-rate adventurers. I've made them get a feel for the work, and in this outing, they learned transportation, and camping. They even learned about labyrinths. Anything more is unnecessary."

She had already taught them the fundamentals.

So there was no problem.

Zelphy ended the conversation there.

While Hawkins was mildly amazed, he had nothing to say against her work ethic as an advisor.

She definitely was carrying out her job.

She was working as far as her fee covered, and it wasn't her place for her to say anything about the minor inner workings of the guild.

"I guess it fits you. But this time you didn't earn a reward, so it was nothing but unpaid labor, wasn't it?"

The reward was turned over to Lyle, and whatever was found in the labyrinth went to Rondo.

She was just doing volunteer work.

You could call that a failure as an adventurer.

"… Well, there's no point in telling that into someone who's going to retire. This is it for me. I've a fiancé on my hands, and the last thing I'd wish for is an end like him."

Zelphy's last job was advising Lyle's party.

She stored up quite an extent of success as an adventurer, and was recognized by the feudal lord as well.

She was able to skillfully carry out her work from both sides.

But during Aria's case, her role deviated quite a bit.

"It seems you were quite reckless in that matter with Aria-san. You pushed her ono Lyle-kun… If he was actually troubled about it, you planned to take her in, didn't you?"

Zelphy let out a deep sigh.

"Hah~ good grief… if he couldn't put us with Lady Aria, I had a whole 『If you want to save someone, then make sure you're able to look after them to the end!』 speech prepared before taking her

back. But that oblivious rich kid seems to be able to overcome whatever you throw at him. That one's going to rise far higher than I ever could. ”

Zelphy started to complain about how she had nothing left to teach.

Hawkins played along with her complaints.

“That's right. I've seen many adventurers in my time, but Lyle's group will surely rise up there. Perhaps he may even become an adventurer whose name is known across the land.”

As Hawkins joked around, Zelphy smiled.

It looks like she didn't think it that far through.

“That sounds interestin'. In that case, I'm the woman who taught the country's prominent adventurer! That's quite the splendid title there if I do say so myself.”

And the conversation shifted to the beautiful staff member.

“That aside, boss. What ended up happenin' to the beauty?”

The look in Zelphy's eyes was quite harsh.

“… You played your hand before you departed, didn't you. An order came from the feudal lord for us to give an explanation. In Dalein, that guild's standing is below that man's. We had no choice but to give in when an explanation was demanded.”

Hawkins' face turned pale as he remembered the beauty.

At the same time, it ended up that her father was to leave Dalien's adventurers' guild.

Officially, he was to raise a new guild hall, and become the branch chief there.

But that location was an area where land was to be reclaimed, and a new village was planned to be built.

It was pretty much an exile notice from the city of Dalien.

“As expected of the lord. He moves quite fast. The people can have peace of mind.”

Zelphy was definitely attached to the guild.

But at the same time, she was part of the city of Dalien.

Now that she was considering retirement, which side of would have more merits to her? It was, without question, the feudal lord’s.

The guild didn’t have any plans on sticking itself into the matter either.

“Because of that, itw as hell for a while.”

This time, it was Hawkins’ turn to complain. But Zelphy was smiling.

“Well I’m happy to hear it. We had our share of troubles, mind you. It’s about time the guild went through a bit of hell.”

‘Good grief,’ Hawkins whispered. He neatly lifted up the documents, and stood, before he left the room…

❼

The morning two days after our return.

I was feeling quite refreshed.

“What an exhilarating morning. It’s as if I’ve been completely reborn. So this is Growth!”

I stood up on top of the bed, and spread out my arms, as I looked up at the ceiling.

The ceiling was quite close, and I could see the stains on it quite clearly, but I didn’t mind.

There, I jumped off of the bed, and did a magnificent squatting landing before leisurely raising myself.

It was as if my senses had widened, and I had gotten bigger, myself.

“I’m feelin’ it… My Mana is higher than before! I’m totally different from the me who just barely scraped by before! I have… been reborn!!”

Letting out a loud cry in the room, I truly felt good.

It was as if I was going to run off at any moment.

I was sluggish all the way up to yesterday night, but it’s as if that time was a lie.

“If it’s now, even flying through the sky is… impossible? No, yes we can! There isn’t a thing to fear in the world! Celes who!? No, it would be nice if I could win, but…”

As I remembered Celes, I suddenly grew timid.

I shook my head to forget her, and for now, I just wanted to shout out.

“I’ve GROOOOOWWWNN!!”

There, I heard the sound of hurried footsteps, and the door to my room was opened with quite some force.

There, Aria, with a face bright red, was standing with teary eyes.

“What’s the problem, Aria? Making a teary face like that… Did something sad happen, perhaps? You can always find a friend in me!”

I spread both my arms, and covered her cheeks with my hands.

“Please don’t make any more of a ruckus! You’re making me remember the me of the past!”

Hearing about her past self, I tilted my head.

And I noticed.

“What? Did you do something when you first experienced a Growth? Don’t worry about all the way back when you were that small. I mean, right now, I’m beginning to wonder about why I worried about something so small. I want to take the me of the past, and punch the

crap out of him!”

I punched the air, and an image of my beating the crap out of the past me floated in my head as I raised my left arm into the air.

“… No. Mine were nothing like this. They were normal.”

To Aria, who squatted down, and tilted her head, I raised a loud laugh.

“Where’s your energy, Aria! Right, let’s go see Rondo-san today! I’ll have to give him my thanks from that one time. On top of that, let’s do a banquet with our reward! My treat!”

As I acted in high tensions, Aria’s eyes seemed like they didn’t know where she should be looking.

If you look at me with such lightless eyes, it’s embarrassing, you know.

“Don’t stare at me so much… you’re making me blush.”

As I flipped my hair with one hand, and made a pose, Aria silently stood up, and left.

❼

『Don’t stare at me so much; you’re making me blush.』

As the Third Generation flipped his hair, and made a pose, it was as if the entire table had burst into laughter.

I was digging my face into the table, and I used both of my hands to slam against it numerous times.

Next, the Third made a motion of pushing out his fists, as if to punch barehanded.

『I want to take the me of the past, and punch the crap out of him!』

And once more, the ancestors burst into laughter.

The First Generation held his stomach in laughter, and his legs were

kicking up and down.

『Since coming here, this is the first I've laughed so much! My stomach is killing me~!』

The Second was covering his mouth, and shaking.

『So you can fly through the sky, Lyle. Puh!』

Don't let out a laugh! As I thought something like that, the Fourth removed his glasses, and started wiping the tears that had formed from his laughing.

『You can always find a friend in me, he said… why don't you just put some stuff like that out there normally.』

The Fifth gazed at me with lukewarm eyes.

『Don't worry about it. It's something everyone experiences. You feel open-hearted on your first Growth. Look, Novem watched over you without saying anything, didn't she? That's what families are usually supposed to do.』

I cried out.

"I want to take the me of just now, and beat the crap out of him!!"

But the Sixth continued to pursue me.

『No, still. That sort of ruckus isn't one you see often. Lyle, perhaps you have the talent to bring laughter to people.』

Even if you say that while laughing, you don't have any persuasive force there.

In the first place, making people laugh, and making people laugh *at you* are completely different things.

The ancestors were teasing me, but my grandfather, the Seventh Generation, was desperately trying to contain himself.

『R-right. It's something everyone goes through. There's nothing to be embarrassed aobut, Lyle… Bufu…!!』

Unable to stand it any longer, he broke out. I stared at him with cold eyes, as I inquired as to what reason I was called out here in the first place.

“So, for what reason have you called me out today? If it was just to tease, I’m leaving.”

As I said that with an irritated voice, the others continued to laugh, as they stopped me.

The Fourth recovered first, and…

『Wait, it’s actually an important talk. It’s just that this time’s Growth left too strong an impact, and… it’s no good. Remembering it’s bringing me to tears.』

Looking at him cover his mouth, I scratched at my face with both hands.

Why did I do something like that?

Why did all those foolish words leave my mouth?

Regretting isn’t doing anything.

The Third grinned, as he picked up where the Fourth left off.

『It’s about your Skill, Lyle, but unlike ours, it’s a perpetually active type, right.』

“That’s right.”

As I stared at the Third, intently looking at me, he sighed, and continued on.

『It’s probably one of the reasons your Mana expenditure was so high, but once it’s been activated, it’s the type that will never stop draining your Mana. Its effects may be large, but just as before, we’ll have to put a restriction on your usable Mana.』

Since I had undergone a Growth, I did have enough Mana to handle it. But that doesn’t change the fact the Skill was chaining me down.

The Third continued.

『At the same time as that, we've given a little bit of thought towards your situation on our part. And according to the Second over there…』

Having come to him, the Second opened his mouth.

『You're the type that needs a ridiculously large amount of experience. The state you were in before the Growth was one thing, but with that as the backlash, you were able to grow a considerable margin. You're the type that amasses a large amount of experience, and grows all at once, but… TO put it bluntly, your case is too extreme. Just think of it as you needing several times the experience of a normal person.』

I started to doubt my own ears.

I had massive Growths, but in exchange, I needed many times the amount of experience to grow.

What's more, more than twice.

"Is there anything we can do about that? Look, I mean, my Skill has started displaying its effect, right?"

As I said that, the Second shook his head.

『Even if you're increasing it with a Skill, in your current state, wouldn't it just be by twenty to thirty percent? If you think about your next Growth, you'll need even more Experience than for this one.』

"… Meaning?"

『Keep the time you leave Dalien for good in your field of vision. If you stay here, it will be several years before your next Growth goes off. If played poorly, even ten isn't an unreal number.』

The Second's eyes were quite serious. That isn't the face of a liar.

He's earnestly recommending that I move forward.

"We're still in the middle of hiring an advisor."

The Third spoke.

『It was just three months, right? Once you've diligently finished with that, you should separate from Dalien. This may be an easy place to proceed, but do you intend to stay here your whole life, Lyle? I think that is quite impossible.』

The Fifth supplemented.

『I'll bet the feudal lord also wants you out. If you plan to stay here, you'll be placed under his influence. There is no way that would be for your sake. When it comes to it, that lord can easily cut you aside… For both of your sakes, it would be best if you left.』

To Dalien's feudal lord Ventra-san, I was a ticking time bomb, where no one knew when the Walt House would take action in regards to me.

Just me being there was troublesome.

"When the advising period ends, I'll leave Dalien. Until then, I should consider where to move next, right?"

As I said that, everyone nodded with serious faces.

And in the end, the First spoke.

『On top of that. There's something I have to say too. Tomorrow or so, come over here. I think it'll take time, so keep that in mind.』

To his earnest eyes, I nodded in response.

The atmosphere surrounding the other ancestors had also subsided.

As always, the Fourth Generation signaled the end of the meeting.

『Let's wrap it up here. Even so, it seems you've opened your heart to Lyle quite a bit, Founder.』

Thinking back to the start, it was definitely something unimaginable.

I mean, he even told me, quite clearly, that he hated me.

I never even thought it would come to his myself.

The First seemed to be the same.

『Sell, I recognized him anyways. Lyle had already proven his strength to me. He saved Aria-chan for me, so I'm just answering to that.』

For some reason, I was strangely caught up by his words.

11 - The Start of the Walt House

Having experienced Growth, and having shown a painful side of myself to Novem and Aria… as well as all of the ancestors, I stopped by the Jewel's conference room as per my promise with the First.

Unlike usual, the First was standing in front of his own room.

And today, the Second was sitting at the table.

"How rare, Second."

As I said that, he gave a short reply.

『Yeah.』

The First was smiling.

I wondered if the two had gotten into a fight like always. That in mind, I asked what had happened.

"Did you get into another fight? What was it about this time?"

The First shook his head.

『As if all we ever do is fight. We just talked a bit about the past, and said what we wanted. Now let's go, Lyle. Oh, right.』

The First opened his own room's door, but before he entered, he called out to the Second.

『I'll leave the rest to you, Crassel.』

The Second merely dismissed him with his hand. This sort of back and forth from these guys was quite rare, I thought.

(They usually do nothing but fight. How rare.)

As I thought that, I passed through the door with the First Generation to find an old townscape extending before me.

There were even some places where the stone pavement was crumbling.

The style was quite old, and the Walt House's Weihs Territory was much further developed.

And there were even people walking around, carrying out their daily lives.

But…

"I can't touch them?"

As I suddenly tried to dodge a person that came at me, My shoulder was pushed against a wall.

But I didn't feel anything.

『This is my recollections, or perhaps the inside of my memory. The amount of things you can touch are limited, and it's useless no matter how many times you try talking to these guys. Hey, c'mon, let's go already.』

As I watched through the main street that gave off a crude feeling, the First walked ahead.

It was surely somewhere I'd never seen before, but there was no doubt about it.

(Is this the past of the estate? No, for the First's memory, the scale is off. It may feel a little crude, but the area's scale is on the level of a town or city.)

If you think of the extent of the territory, the House's land shouldn't have advanced to this point in the First's time.

Following the First, we stepped off the main road to a slightly narrower path.

There, four to five story buildings lined themselves up, as if to make the sky seem small, and the road slender.

I couldn't smell anything, but the path seemed dirty.

“Just where is this?”

『Ah? It’s the Imperial Capital Centralle. About two hundred years ago, I guess?』

Hearing that, I was a little surprised.

“Two hundred years!”

『Don’t be so shocked, boy. I was born around fifty years into the kingdom’s history, you know. Right now, we’re around three hundred into it, right? Something like that isn’t shocking at all.』

“R-right.”

I had never been too far into Centralle, but I wondered if it was this sort of place as I continued on.

And when we had slipped out of the alley, we reached a residential area, where houses were lined up.

“This is?”

『My parent’s home. That back there was a shortcut, so we took it.』

Hearing that, I…

(So this is where the Capital’s Noble Walt House was… well, we’re not related to them at all anymore, or so I heard.)

I heard that we became independent, and severed all ties.

Of course, with them being imperial Nobles, it’s not like they could act too friendly to the provincial Count House, the Walt House.

I mean, I think this Walt House was a knight house in the capital.

Even if you called them nobles, they were the tip of the iceberg, without even managerial posts.

“So what are we here for? Or wait, do you have something to show me?”

As I said that, the First silently nodded.

And his eyes were directed ahead.

There, watching a red haired woman… Aria, from afar was a young man carrying a large piece of luggage in his hand.

His age was probably in the early twenties.

『… That's me.』

"N-no way!"

I don't think it was wrong for me to be surprised. I mean, his young self looked like an amiable young man. His hair was put in order, and his face was cleanly shaven.

There wasn't anything to point to his characteristic barbarian style.

『I-it's no lie! Like that, I would occasionally catch sight of Alice-san. I swore to one day rise up from being the third son of a knight house, and resolved my heart to come for her one day!』

It seems he was surprisingly pure.

And the scene changed.

There, a young First Generation was staring at a recruitment flyer for the pioneering corps posted on a wall.

And the Young First shouted out.

『This is it! With this, I can get promoted, and I can finally go to Alice-san's side!』

He delightedly sprinted off.

『It was at that time. I went and bought a discounted blue gem at a bargain. The other types were expensive, but these didn't have any popularity, so they were cheap. And wait, there wasn't anything like Magic Tools in my time, so if you wanted Skills, there was nothing you could do but buy a gem. If you didn't record anything on it later, there was no meaning to it. Didn't know that back then.』

The reason the Jewel was purchased was because it was unpopular, and cheap…

As always, that's quite a reason there.

『It's better than having nothing, right? Still, I really wanted a red one, you know.』

Taking the cheap blue gem in hand, the young First stared longingly at the red and yellow ones that were labelled at a price far beyond his reach.

The First looked at his own form, and found it loathsome.

『Perhaps this was a mistake. Of course, it's not like I had a choice. For a lowly Knight House, without a managerial position, we were a low-return household living off pension. I hated a house like that. I wanted to become independent one day, and make it big… that's what I thought, though.』

The scene changed yet again, and this time, it looked like a few years had gone by.

In a bar in Centralle, a young First, who looked a little wilder than before, was crying into his drink.

"… What happened?"

『… I returned to Centralle for a while. The village was kinda starting to take shape, so I thought I would go bring a marriage proposal to Alice-san.』

The result was just as I already knew.

Aria's ancestor Alice-san married into the Lockwarde family.

『I was just starting to hate any and everything.』

"I do get that feeling from you."

The youth drinking liquor before me continued pouring out tears, as he ordered more, again and again.

In place of his betrothal money, he had converted it all into drinking money. I heard the First whisper that as he held his head in his hands.

(That's no good, isn't it? To do that sort of thing all of a sudden. He should have brought the talk forward first, or stayed in touch… and wait, the difference in their status' was still too great, so he would've been turned down at the gate.)

Love across rank.

Without fate lending the slightest of hands, the First's first love came to an end.

And this time when the scene warped, a tranquil landscape extended before me. It extended, but on it, a heated battle was being carried out.

A barbarian-styled young First Generation was exchanging blows with another wearing similar pelts.

"… What is this supposed to be?"

『Hmm? Ah, it's that. The territory of those who didn't follow the rule of the kingdom from the start, and my territory overlapped. In that case, you have to decide who it belongs to, right?』

"No, even if you call talking with your fists the natural way to sort these matters out… ah, you won."

The First pummeled his way to victory, and like that, he raised a war cry, as the barbarians around him fell to their knees.

Even the man he was fighting kneeled before him.

『How nostalgic. Back then, even thinking became detestable, so I just carried out my job.』

Like that, time went forward again, and a First Generation a little more weathered than before was having a drinking bout outside.

There, he cried out.

『Ya see, the wife I'm gonna take has to be a beauty! Healthy! And she's gotta have a good head, and nice skin! I don't got no interest in anything else! These 're the Walt Family Precepts, ya' hear!』

With the drink as his fuel, he let out some outrageous things.

Looking at his own form, the First sighed.

『This time is that, you know… I didn't want to have to deal with anything like marriage anymore. I mean, I couldn't think it possible that there was a woman out there better than Alice-san.』

"You really are cruel. Because of this, all the future heads went through hell to get married, you know."

『… Oy, did you seriously think I thought my drunken spiel would be taken seriously?』

That's what the man said, but the people sitting around who heard his drunken spiel seemed to have taken his words quite seriously.

Hey, whose daughter here fits those conditions?
Ah, my place's daughter isn't too smart.
My sister's a little sickly.

They began a serious discussion.

And within them, there was a single decent-looking man. He was older than the First, and he put his hand to his forehead with a troubled expression on his face.

His attire was more splendid than the surrounding civilians, and he had some dignity to him.

『Ah, that person there's the old man. He had a territory nearby, and he taught me quite a bit. In the end, this person relied on his influence to bring a Noble wife over to me.』

By『old man』, he probably means this generation's Forxuz Head.

He looked like quite a decent person to me, so seeing him go through troubles for the First Generation made me feel a little apologetic.

"So you relied on the Forxuz House from back then as well. I wonder just how far our Walt House's debt runs with them."

『He was a good person, you know.』

Having my sarcasm fall flat, I sighed.

When the scene changed, an expanded village was burning up.

The First Generation of his memory wielded a large sword as he confronted the monster before him… with ashen skin, a powerful jaw, and large forelimbs, a Dragon Subspecies.

The sword in his hand, length alone, was more than that of a single person.[1]

“That sword is…”

I was instantly able to recognize the similarities it had to the sword that came out when I gripped the Jewel.

『A monster this big came to the village. Even if we got all the men together, it looked impossible. That’s why I stood up front.』

The large sword in hand, the First Generation screamed out his Skill name as he began fighting the monster.

For the beast several times his size, he relied on the momentum and weight of the blade, and cut it down.

His figure was truly one of a hero.

『Full Burst… that was my trump card. I could raise my own abilities from two to five times over.』

“Eh? That high? I get the feeling it wasn’t that high when I used it? But if you raise your abilities that high, is there no backlash or anything?”

『Hah? As if I know! Just ignore the side effects. Ignore them!』

On the First-like opinion, I gave a strained smile.

『I usually saved up my Mana, and exploded it all at once when I used it. It raised my abilities in proportion to whatever I had saved up. For me, it would be around two to three times my abilities in a month, but it will probably be faster for you.』

Between us, the amount of Mana we possessed was too far apart.

With the Fifth onwards taking in the bloodlines of magicians, we

became nobles able to use magic in the truest sense of the word.

While we were talking, the First finally managed to sever the Dragon Subspecies' head, and emerged victorious.

And a single child rushed over to him.

… It was probably the Second.

『… I guess it was around this time. Papa's amazing, or something, is what he got around to saying. Up to then, I couldn't do anything fatherly for him, and it wasn't easy on my wife. So I wanted to be able to leave something behind to the two of them.』

The child Second Generation seemed to be a boy who admired his father's gallant figure.

And the times changed again.

The village had expanded even further, but my impression was…

"Isn't that completely irresponsible?"

『…』

The First stayed quiet.

As the First Generation of his memory was doing work in the Fields, a grown Second Generation shouted at him.

『Please give me a break already! You're irresponsibly expanding the fields so far… because of that, there are some fights breaking out among the people! Why not think for a second!』

And from that scene, time went on even further, and we found ourselves inside the manor.

The estate the First Generation lived in was ridiculously modest in comparison to the current Walt House's.

The First was about to leave with a garden hoe in hand, and he passed by a silent Second Generation.

The two of them were unable to look each other in the eye.

『… It was a mistake, right? I just wanted to leave something behind, but in the end, all I left to the boy were problems with the territory.』

His haphazardly expanded fields caused problems among the people, but the First shut them up with his own charisma and strength.

The one who worked more than anyone else was the Feudal Lord, the First Generation… Basil Walt, and no one would oppose the hero who saved the village time and again.

But it looks like their dissatisfaction was to be directed at the Second.

『I just wanted to let them eat a little more. I cut down the forests, and expanded the fields… by the time I noticed it, I had left nothing but problems. No one would come complain to me. But those complaints were directed at that guy.』

“Founder…”

『Back then, he had ignored me up to the end. Having come here, when he started complaining to me… I was honestly happy. I was only ever able to have a family shout out with him back when he was a kid, you know.』

It seems their usual belligerent attitude was more decent than how the two of them treated each other before.

Both of them must be awkward people.

And the Scene returned to the First’s fight with the Dragon, and froze there.

『In my time, we were recovering from the chaos, and we were going to make the times to come more abundant. There were many villages crushed by the war, so we set out pioneering. Reclaiming the land. However, food was scarce, and it wasn’t rare for there to be a problem with starvation.』

I did hear that it was a rough time.

That when the Walt House was reclaiming land for themselves, it

was a relentless era. When my father was still nice to me, he told me such stories.

He also spoke of the greatness of the First Generation who raised a village like that.

Reasons aside, he truly was a grand person.

『Lyle, have you ever been troubled with food?』

To be honest, no.

Even when I was distanced from the rest of the House, I was still fed.

Even after I was driven out, Zell and Novem were there, so I never experienced starvation.

(He'll definitely be mad.)

If you wanted to call it a luxury, it was definitely one.

From the point of view of the food-troubled First Generation, I, who had no worries of starvation despite being thrown onto the streets, must not be a good sight to look upon.

Even so, looking at my weakness, and my mulling over nothing, he must be infuriated.

"… Never. I've never starved. I've experienced hunger, of course, but even in times like those, I was able to find a meal."

I prepared myself for whatever he was going to say, but when he turned to me, the First was smiling.

『I see. Then it's all good. My descendants were never troubled with having enough to eat. Then all I've done wasn't a complete waste! I've heard something nice at the end!』

The smiling First Generation produced the large sword from somewhere, and presented it to me.

It was the silver one that gave off a pale light from that time…

The sword that cut down the red orc in one blow.

『Let me teach you my last Skill. You were flapping around when you used it back then, so I've got to teach you properly. The Skill name is【Full Burst】. It releases all the Mana you normally store up all at once, and it explosively raises your abilities. Try fighting the one over there.』

The First pointed to the dragon subspecies.

It wasn't able to fly, and it was more like a monster that only resembled one, but a dragon was still a dragon.

They're dangerous opponents.

"Eh? But I haven't stored up Mana or anything."

As I said that, the First put his hand on top of my head. After my head was violently stirred up, power started pouring into my body.

『Even I was able to do it. If it's you, then you'll do even better… have at it!』

Saying that, the First Generation hit my back with the palm of his hand.

As I unsteadily stepped forward, the dragon that had been frozen in memories up until now started to move. Before I noticed it, the First of his memories had vanished.

"Good grief, why does he have to spring these things up so suddenly. Please think of how I feel being thrown around like this!"

As I rushed forward with the sword in hand, I swung it.

No matter how you looked at it, it was a sword I shouldn't have been able to swing, but perhaps from the effects of his Skill, I could wield it easily.

(For him to be able to use it with no side effects, I can call it nothing but cheating.)

As the dragon tried to crush me with its fore feet, I retreated back, and used Magic.

『Fire Bullet!』

From the tip of my finger, balls of fire shoot out one after another, but each and every shot was exceedingly powerful.

As they hit the Dragon, they explode, and that large build falters, and even gets pushed back.

Like that, I led myself into the second magic.

I also wanted to confirm my output. Since my abilities were being raised by a Skill, just how powerful will it become…

“Lightning!”

As a purple flash of lightning assailed the dragon, the surroundings were suddenly brightened up.

It was light from the magic, but its elevated power output surprised even me.

It was greater than I had imagined.

“This is… I’ll have to get used to using it.”

If played poorly, even my allies could get dragged into it. On the thought, I broke into a cold sweat. And after running forward, I took a leap.

The black-burnt dragon turned its head left and right in order to find me.

But at that time, I was over its head… right above it.

I lower the large sword, and blow away its neck.

The same method the First used to end it.

And as the Skill’s effects wore off, the sword began to feel extraordinarily heavy, and it pierced into the ground. While still gripping the handle, I tried to lift its weight.

“As I thought… it’s hard.”

While I said that, the First walked up to me. Looking at me, he

smiled.

『If you can do that much, there won't be a problem! As expected of my descendant.』

Getting my breathing in order, I lifted the sword that had regained its original weight onto my shoulder.

The First raised his right hand.

Sensing something, I raised my right hand as well. With my left hand, I stabbed the sword into the ground.

Like that, the First Generation gave me a high five with all his strength.

My hand stung, but the feeling wasn't bad.

『Lyle… have you decided on your goal yet?』

Having been told that, I remembered my conversations I had with the First up to now. As I stood unable to answer, the First smiled, and muttered, 'so be it.'

『You'll have to decide what you want to do. You can even go off, and become independent somewhere if you want. You can raise a village and become a feudal lord if you want. Living a quiet life with Novem-chan doesn't sound bad either. Though personally, I'd like it if you look out for Aria-chan too. Also… you can even challenge that Celes if you want, you know.』

Hearing Celes brought up, it felt like something had grabbed onto my heart tightly.

My fear was being revived.

But to someone like me, the First spoke with a tone full of expectations.

『If there's someone out there who could stop her, it may just be you. Well, just do what you want. Ask the others for whatever comes next.』

"Eh?"

『My role ends here. I've said what I wanted, and it'll probably be fine if I just leave the rest to you. Rather than someone like me, you'll be much more reliable.』

I wasn't able to comprehend what he was saying.

No perhaps, I just didn't want to accept it. The fact that the First Generation was going do dissapear from my life.

And I tried stopping him.

"Please wait. I still need the First Generation… I still need Basil Walt's advice! Why not save me with your instincts as usual? Your instincts are incredibly sharp, you know!"

My voice sounded like it was breaking down.

But even I wasn't able to understand why it was I wanted to cry.

『I have no wisdom, or technique. And also… if it's instincts, the Second isn't to be looked down on himself. I mean, that guy's my son. Oh, right, you're also my descendant!』

Gahahaha. The way he laughed gave off an impression as if he had no regrets left behind.

『After all, we're just memories left behind by Skills. The real ones have died long ago. We're the Skills in the Jewel themselves… once we've transmitted all our knowledge, that's the end for us.』

Once they're transmitted, they'll disappear. They'll vanish.

"So you… knew?"

My voice was shaking.

『No, it's just a hunch. I get it… it looks like those guys also have a vague inkling of it, so you better ask them for the specifics.』

I extended his hand to him, and he spoke.

『My Skill is already yours now. Use it however you want, Lyle… and don't lose.』

Don’t lose to what?

I was about to ask that, but before I could let out my voice, the scenery around me changed.

❼

In the same room as ever in the Jewel, I put my hand on the place where the First’s door was once before.

With his feet resting on the table, the Second called out to me.

『Don’t cry, it’s unsightly.』

“Eh?”

Being told that, I touched my face, and found I was crying.

『He taught you everything. His role in this is over.』

“S-still! This is a Jewel, right? Then why is it in a form like this!? If it’s just teaching, a gem works well enough. I can’t understand the meaning of you guys coming out only to disappear!”

On my scream, the second gave a disinterested answer.

『… A gem cannot pass down everything. Unable to grasp the entirety of the Skill, all it lets you use is a small portion. We are here in order to teach you the Skills. That’s why we exist in this space. Did you know? Our memories end at the last moment where the real ones of us touched the gems. Meaning we only remember up to the moment where we passed it on to the next generation.』

Hearing that, I was taken aback.

The ancestors exist here for nothing but to teach me their Skills. No, the Skills were mimicking their forms.

『It’s also strange that we can even talk to you without a problem. The words we should be using trace back to two hundred years ago, you know. You said that that old book was hard to read, and yet like this, you’re able to hold a normal conversation with us. Why do you

think that is?』

On the Second's thoughts, I came to an answer.

Because there would be no meaning otherwise.

In order to transmit the Skills to me, the ancestors matched their words with mine. When the times change, the manner of speech subtly changes as well.

That was more than clear when looking back at writings of the past. Words that were once popular… words that change in meaning, but like this, I was able to converse without a problem.

And that was solely because the Jewel had a message it wanted to get through to me.

… That was the Jewel's role.

『Did you notice? That's right. We exist with no more of a purpose than to impart you with the Skills. We teach you how to use them, and even their effective usages.』

I noticed that the large sword had left my hand.

And it was floating in the space where the First once sat.

His chair had disappeared, and his door vanished… above the table, in the space he once sat, it simply floated.

A large silver sword, with a blue Jewel embedded in the hilt.

That sword was the proof that the First had recognized me.

"Why… in that case, why did you… if it was just to teach me, then why not just do that! Why did he get so involved with me, and make it so that I have to go through such sorrowful emotions like these!?"

At the first, I hated it.

He was loud, and there were even times I though of him as nothing but a pain.

But… he taught me various things.

He recognized me.

Even so…

As I collapsed on the spot, the Second spoke.

『That's what we would have wanted to do as well. But… with our memories, the damn thing even recorded our hearts. We couldn't just leave you alone. And the First Generation… Basil Walt left you to us now.』

Couldn't abandon me, the Second said. I didn't know how I was supposed to respond.

It was pitiful.

In the end, I couldn't even tell him my goal, and I gave him a pitiful parting.

"… Will we meet again?"

『… If someone comes to possess the Jewel after you, then perhaps meeting would be possible. Though at that point, you'll be on our side. Still, I doubt that we'll have a recollection of the memories we're making with you now. The merits of retaining them are low. It's because all we exist for is to pass down the usage, and the Skill names.』

In the end, I won't be meeting the First Generation again.

Whatever is recorded in the Jewel will be my Skill, and not the real me.

The Second spoke.

『In the first place, it's a miracle that you were able to meet like this in the first place. The blue Jewel was passed down again and again, and it made its way to your hands. Lyle, this is not your place to be sad… in fact, be proud. That person… my old man recognized you. Stick out your chest.』

Hearing that, I opened my eyes in the world of reality.

❼

“Lyle-sama, are you alright?”

“… Novem?”

As I was lying down on my bed, Novem looked at me with a worried expression on her face.

She should have been sleeping in a different room, but for some reason, she had made her way to mine.

“It looked like you were having a nightmare. No, well… I heard you crying, so I came over.”

As I wiped my face, I found that it was covered in tears.

I forcibly made a smile, and directed it at her.

“I’m alright. I just saw a bit of a sad dream. Right now, I feel refreshed.”

“A sad dream?”

Novem tilted her head, as she handed over a towel soaked in water she had prepared. I accepted it, and wiped my face as I thought to myself.

(If I kept crying forever, the First would be angry with me. I’m a man that Basil Walt… the father of the provincial Noble Walt House has recognized.)

Now that I look back at it, he had some barbaric and violent sides to him.

But there’s no doubt he was a reliable person.

And ironically, while he hated me the most, he was the first one to accept me in the truest sense of the word.

(I’ve been recognized by that person.)

“Shall I prepare a warm drink for you?”

Novem looked worried, so I nodded, and left it at that.

“Right. Let’s go get something to drink together.”

“Yes.”

Novem went off to prepare something, and I called out to her.

“Novem… thank you.”

Novem seemed a little perplexed, but she nodded with a smile.

“What’s happened to you today, Lyle-sama?”

“No, it’s just something I felt like getting across. There’s no deeper meaning.”

I rose from the bed, and headed to the Kitchen alongside her.

Notes

1. So that hunk of iron really could slay dragons.

12 - Desiring a Reunion

Since coming to Dalien, about three months had passed.

As Zelphy-san's contract was nearing its end, we were going over the achievements held under the contract in a private room of the guild.

Hawkins-san bore witness, as I looked over the documents.

We came here to issue an evaluation for Zelphy-san's job as an advisor.

The highest possible evaluation was【A】, but filling that out would mean having to pay out an additional reward as well.

No matter how well one does, getting a rank of【B】was normal.

As we sat with a table between us… me, Novem, and Aria turned to look at at Hawkins-san and Zelphy-san who were sitting within our field of vision.

With a serious expression, Hawkins-san gave me an explanation.

"Lyle-kun, just fill in whatever evaluation you believe to be right. If this is to birth resentment and harm, the guild will hand down a firm punishment, so please do not worry about that aspect."

Zelphy-san doesn't say anything in particular.

She just sat there.

Aria was in a complicated mental state, as she glared at her.

Even after the urgent request, we remained under her guidance, and gained all the necessary knowledge and experience of an adventurer.

In this span of three months, sther has never been a moment I thought to be a waste.

On the form, I filled out this highest grade of【A】.

“… That highest evaluation, is it? You know what that means, right?”

As Hawkins-san said that, Novem placed the money on the table.

Inside the small leather bag, was three gold coins.

Hawkins-san accepted it, and confirmed the contents.

Since the amount we paid for the request was quite high, the additional reward we had to hand out was quite a considerable amount.

Of the three gold coins, one of them would be taken by the guild.

“Confirmation complete. Well then, an additional reward of two gold coins will be transferred to Zelphy-san.”

Having accepted the two coins, Zelphy-san stood, and turned to leave the room.

“Good grief, what a pain that job was. I won’t be doing it again, you hear me.”

Ever since the urgent request, she had begun to take a curt attitude when dealing with us.

No, that attitude was mostly directed towards Aria.

Looking at her exit the room, Hawkins-san spoke.

“She really can’t be honest, can she. Everyone already figured it out long ago.”

Novem agreed.

“If we didn’t do something like this, she would never accept her wedding present.”

Right.

We all knew why Zelphy-san was taking on such a blunt disposition.

It’s precisely because Aria knew that she felt so conflicted.

Zelphy-san was retiring as an adventurer, and marrying a common man.

Our additional reward was also meant as a present to her.

Novem put her hand on Aria's shoulder.

"Aria-san, I think that Zelphy-san is still close by. Please go have a final talk with her."

"B-but… she won't even talk to me as of late."

As Aria became sullen, Novem shook her head, and repeated herself with an earnest look in her eyes.

"If you don't go here, you'll regret it. We will be leaving Dalien. There's the possibility that you will never meet again… go to her."

Being told by Novem, who was using a stronger tone than usual, Aria left the room.

In order to talk with Zelphy-san.

And Hawkins-san put down a different document from before on the table.

"It's a guild change form. And this is the guild card we had kept in our custody. So you really are leaving right away."

As he made a lonesome face, he made a light joke about how the adventurers coming over to him would decrease once more.

With one of the guild's top brass gone, Hawkins-san's name was proposed to fill the hole left behind. I knew.

"We won't keep to a long stay. Otherwise to both Zelphy-san and Hawkins-san… and even Ventra-san, we may bring trouble."

The fact that my home, the Walt House hadn't shown any movement thus far was ominous.

The fact that I didn't know what sort of thing they would do invoked fear.

Also, Ventra-san… Dalien's feudal lord, if the time comes to it, is a person who'll likely present me to them. I won't say that's a bad thing.

If you think about protecting the territory, it's the natural course of action.

When compared to the Walt House's land, the scale of Dalien was miniscule. They're level of influence was on par with the imperial capital of Centralle.

"… It looks like you have some circumstances surrounding you, so I won't probe too deep into it. But it would be nice if we were to meet again someday."

"That;s right. Hawkins-san, I've been under your care."

I filled out the forms.

As I submitted the home change request form for me, Novem, and Aria, I accepted the documents from the guild. They were what we would need to submit at whatever guild we would make into out base of operations next.

I stood up, and Novem followed suite.

And Novem also offered her gratitude.

"Thank you for your assistance. I hope you stay in good health, Hawkins-san."

Hawkins-san nodded.

I got the feeling my eyes were becoming a little teary, so I left the room.

At the very end, I learned that I was a person quite quick to tears.

❼

A corridor in the guild…

“Zelphy!”

Aria found Zelphy, and ran up to her.

Zelphy awkwardly scratched her face, as she averted her eyes.

“What? I’m going out to drink from here, you know.”

On her attitude, Aria didn’t know what it was she should say.

But she had also resolved herself to leave Dalien alongside Lyle.

They had already ben vacated from the House, and had even bought the tickets for the coupled carriage to Centralle.

“… Thank you for everything, Zelphy. I was ignorant of the ways of the world, and I did nothing but cause you trouble… also, I never even tried to know what sort of feelings you were going through.”

The words weren’t coming out properly.

The form of Zelphy rummaging through the corpse of an adventurer, and stealing his belongings for her own. Aria had looked upon it in despair.

But after that, she heard that Zelphy had visited the departed adventurer’s home, and handed over his belongings.

She had begun to corner herself over how she despaired over Zelphy, without gving it enough thought.

What Aria wanted to tell her was to not worry about her anymore.

“I’m alright. I think I’ll search for some happiness in my own way. So… Zelphy, you should become happy as well.”

Aria looked at her face.

Zelphy was crying.

“… I’m sorry. Milady. I’m also… I couldn’t do anything… I couldn’t do anything but watch, and…”

As Zelphy’s tears started to flow, Aria embraced her.

She called her just as she had when they had played together in the mansion.

“Thank you, sis… I’ll be fine now. That’s why you should also find happiness for yourself.”

Zelphy reciprocated the hug.

Aria confirmed the numerous wounds covering her body.

Those marks were the proof that Zelphy’s house had gone through many trouble to live in Dalien after being driven out of the manor.

But even while going through that, Zelphy had taken action for her sake…

In exchange for cooperating with the feudal lord, the Lockwarde House that was exiled from Centralle found safe haven in Dalien.

In places where she wasn’t watching, Zelphy had gone through much pain…

“Zelphy, thank you for everything. I’ll be alright now.”

Aria remained stuck fast on the one she used to admire as her elder sister.

… She was finally able to tell the sister that had always protected her, that she would be fine.

❼

As I waited in the guild with Novem for Aria’s return, I noticed the party of three that had aided us before approaching.

“Rondo-san!”

“Lyle-kun!”

Of the adventurers that we had gotten to converse with if ever we met, we remained on especially good terms with them.

Using the scarce metal found in the dungeon, Rondo-san had gotten

himself a dagger.

Rahu-san had used it in the production of a new spear.

Rachel-san used it in a portion of her staff.

The three of them were all wearing brand new equipment.

Rondo-san had made his dagger with the same hilt and guard of his prided sword, and a similar design on the sheath. When he first showed it to me, I remember how delighted he looked.

“Did you guys finish the paperwork as well?”

As I said that, Rahu-san gave a wry smile.

“We came here earlier than your party, but we were held up for quite some time. The adventurers who have some extent of power are steadily flowing out of Dalien.”

It was also the town’s characteristic.

Nice on newcomers, and with plenty of odd jobs to earn from. That was Dalien.

On the other hand, it was hard for adventurers who weren’t newbie to find suitable work.

Since Dalien’s guild still wanted to secure skilled adventurers for themselves, it was a problem that caused many a headache.

“Are you guys departing now? Where’s Aria-chan? … Ah, perhaps she fled?”

As always, Rachel-san just said whatever was on her mind.

I shook my head.

“Unfortunately, she hasn’t run away. She had another matter to attend to, so we’re waiting for her. More importantly, are you sure you’ll make your carriage’s departure time?”

There, Rondo-san remembered, and raised his voice quite loud.

“It looks like we don’t have the time to be talking here.”

Rahu-san started panicking.

“Ah, right! Then I guess we’ll go. Give Aria-chan our regards.”

Rachel-san called out to Novem.

“Novem, look after Lyle. He’s unreliable by himself.”

Novem laughed to herself, and nodded.

“Thank you very much. Good tidings to you too, Rachel-san.”

And Rondo-san waved his hand at me as he spoke.

“If we ever meet again, we’ll make some noise together. Lyle-kun… let’s meet again!”

As he made a refreshing leave, I also waved my hand.

“Yes. Let’s meet again!”

The three of them left the guild.

Novem muttered.

“They’re quite good people, Lyle-sama.”

“Right. I want to see them again sometime. For the time when we reunite, I’ll have to become a better adventurer.”

While happily considering our next meeting, me and Novem continued to wait for Aria.

❼

… It happened somewhere on the main road.

Covered in blood, Rond, Rahu and Rachel were collapsed on the path.

Rondo’s prided sword was torn, and his dagger was stolen from him.

Without either of his arms, he was barely breathing on top of the

ground.

But Rahu and Rachel had already let out their final breathes.

“W-wha-what the hell… was that monster.”

It was a monster that was even painful to remember. But it wasn’t some atrocious beast.

… It was a human.

What’s more, a young girl.

Crawling across the ground, he looked at Rachel.

A large burnt hole had been opened in her chest, and her hollow eyes had the traces of tears shed left in them.

Looking at Rahu, he had tried to let the others escape all the way to his end by standing out front, so his wounds were the worst.

As he approached the man, he took one of his lighter portions… his hair in his mouth, and brought it all the way over to Rachel.

Wherever he had crawled, Rondo’s blood had stained the ground.

His sword Skills weren’t able to do the slightest.

Of all things, a group of three, all with Magic Tools, weren’t even able to touch a small girl.

The cause came when they had reached their destination by carriage, and were to go the rest of the way to the town they decided as their home by foot. ON the way, it ensued.

An extravagant carriage had stopped near them.

It was definitely one used by a noble, and from the look of it, not any ordinary noble at that.

“Rachel… Rahu… we’ll, always be together.”

Heading over to Rachel’s empty husk, he released Rahu’s hair, and let it fall on top of it.

When they had all just become adventurers, they met, hit it off, and the three of them had tried their best together for several years. They had started building up strength, and they had even obtained their long-desired Magic Tools.

They were all thinking about the future… but that monster put her eyes on them.

The words the monster girl said, were quite unbelievable ones.

“You, become mine. I don’t need that spear man, or that woman over there. Go dissapear somewhere.”

They were the nonsense of a noble girl who had taken a liking to Rondo.

He had thought that, but the others’ reactions were different.

The girl’s parents, who were riding in the same carriage, flew into a rage at him disregarding the girl’s favor.

It was because Rondo had declined on the grounds of already having a splendid girlfriend in Rachel.

And the guards accompanying the carriage also took their weapons in hand.

If that was all, then they could cut their way through, he thought.

He had confidence in his skills. And he even had Magic Tools.

“That… monster.”

But the Girl first circled around to Rachel’s back, and immediately fired off magic. It happened in an instant.

What Rachel let out in her tears, was Rondo’s name.

In anger, Rondo and Rahu proclaimed that it was an unforgivable act, even if she was a noble, and drew their weapons.

But the moment they were drawn, Rondo’s arms flew off, and his prided weapon was shattered.

The sword he even called his partner was ripped up as if it were a scrap of paper.

His dagger was in the girl's hands. While it was floating in the air with his arms, she grabbed it, and she even had the scabbard that had been hanging at his waist in hand.

He wasn't able to comprehend what had just happened.

And Rahu stood up front, and shouted for him to run with Rachel.

But Rahu was covered in his own blood soon enough.

As if she had lost interest, the girl left. Even now, Rondo could remember the words he heard at that time.

"Good grief, to waste Celes' good will like that."
"Celes, the clothes we finally bought for you have blood stained on them! Oh dear… we're going to a party, you know. Even if you are to change when we get there, you have to pay some more mind to your appearance. Dear, we'll have to prepare Celes' clothing."

The man and woman who seemed to be her parents weren't paing them any mind.

They were mulling over the small stains that had flown out onto her cloth.

"Celes' clothing? As if I'll let her wear the clothing those brutes prepare for her! She's the treasure of the Walt House, you know."

The girl called Celes, while having just used her sword and magic to kill two people in cold blood, was smiling.

"Father, there are times when I want to try choosing different sorts of clothing. I was just in the mood for shopping, so won't you forgive it?"

Hearing her sweet voice, the parents seemed satisfied.

They were parents who doted on their cute daughter… but the scene somehow seemed quite off.

Rondo noticed that the girl's family wasn't actually looking at what

was around them at all.

There wasn't a single thing entering their eyes besides their cute daughter.

The nobles, who had taken their leves on a whim, went off somewhere just as whimsically.

Rondo gathered all his fallen comrades in one place, and as if he was overcome with satisfaction, he lost all of his strength.

In the end, he whispered.

"… I guess I couldn't keep my promise."

And quietly, Rondo closed his eyes…

❼

Aboard the coupled carriage, we arrived at Centralle.

It was the second time we were dropping by, but our objective this time was to carry out some shopping.

The amount of usable sabres I could procure in Dalien was low, and there was also the need for us to decide the next place we would set as our home.

If it was from Centralle, travel would be quite easy, so we stopped by there first.

"Well then, we've arrived, but let's search for an inn for the time being."

Novem gave a reply.

"Perhaps it wouldn't be bad if we spent a few days here either. It's just that we won't be able to afford staying here long enough to make it our home."

Centralle was cold to adventurers.

No, more so, it didn't really need them.

If monsters ever appeared, the nights and soldiers would promptly be dispatched.

The odd jobs were being fought over by the highly populated general populace. Unlike Dalien, it wasn't a fit place for an adventurer to reside.

But as it was at the center of the country, it was a metropolis where goods and information amassed.

Aria was making a conflicted expression.

"After being driven out, I doubt I'll be able to put up with adventurer work here. If we're staying a while, I'll be fine, but I'll have to refuse if it comes to living."

The daughter of the Lockwarde Hose driven out of Centralle, Aria, couldn't permit herselt to set up home in this city.

"We're here for shopping, and information gathering. Once we have all we need, we'll be off."

We do have most of what we need.

While we do have weapons, I'd like to have a weapon that doesn't drain my Mana.

When it was necessary, I could turn the Jewel into the large sword, but if that was all I had, I would be left in quite a bad situation.

"Lyle-sama, will you be circling around the weapons shops?"

Novem asked, and I answered.

"I'll also stop by the armor ones. I'd like to drop by the book stores too."

The book store was the ancestors' request.

I touched the Jewel.

The reason it was much quieter then before was because the First Generation had parted.

He was always the noisy one.

“Well then, let’s look around the shops. Aria-san, are there any famous shops around? Weapons, or armor, or even books… if there’s somewhere useful you know of, I’d like to ask.”

Novem inquired if there was anywhere she knew of.

And Aria started listing out the names of a few shops she had heard of.

“Since it’s Centralle, there are quite a few skilled smiths for armor and weapons. But the price is… If it’s books, I know a place with a good selection. There’s also a library, but at this time of day…”

Hearing about the library, I thought for a bit.

(If we have the time, I’d like to stay for a bit, but I really shouldn’t’ overstay my welcome.)

Centralle was a place that would consume one’s wallet.

They had everything in stock, but to compensate for that fact, the prices put out for that everything was considerably high. The cost of living was also high.

As I was worrying over it, Novem offered some advice.

“If it’s libraries, then【Arumsaas】is said to be the best in the world. I mean, it’s famous as the city of scholars.”

Aria also nodded.

“I know it. I believe it was a city that gathered talented youths from across the land, was it? But there was no feudal lord there either. I think… the cities scholars send out representatives, who decide various things. Perhaps in the same way as Beim?”

As a free city, Beim was managed by the merchants.

Since there was no feudal lord, it was quite an easy one for adventurers to live.

“Arumsaas or Beim… either way, we should decide after gathering

some intel.”

Saying that, I held up the luggage, as I started walking to find the inn we would stay the night.

“Hey, I can at least carry my own.”

Aria frantically tried to take her bag back, but I refused, and walked ahead.

“Don’t mind it, and let’s go. Novem, quite laughing, and hurry up.”

“Yes, I’m sorry, Lyle-sama.”

I urge on Novem, who had started smiling over my exchange with Aria, and walked down the capital’s streets.

When I rememver the streets of the past I walked down with the First Generation, I saw some traces remained.

But unlike before, it had become quite tidy.

“It sure has changed here.”

As I muttered that, Aria tilted her head.

“Hmm? You’ve come here before? And wait, I don’t think this area has changed all too much. Lyle, are you alright?”

Aria directed an uncertain look at me, and I gave a wry smile.

“Yeah, I guess it’s been about two hundred years.”

As I said that, she began staring at me intently.

“It’s a joke. This is my second time here. Last time, we just stopped by on our way to Dalien… that’s all.”

The sky was, just as when I had walked down these streets with the First Generation, clear, and blue.

Epilogue

The first night after arriving at the imperial capital.

I absentmindedly sat on the frame of the window, and stared outside.

The moon was pretty, and I just wanted to stare at it.

The Third called out to me.

『You seem to quite lost in that. Was parting really that painful?』

I hung my head, and smiled a little.

Looking into the room, Novem and Aria were sleeping in the same bed. We did consider booking two rooms, but there wasn't anywhere with such vacancies.

If we had one more person, we probably would have been allowed to book two rooms for two each.

"Yes, it sure is painful. I mean, he left just after he acknowledged me."

As I said that, the Third abandoned his teasing tone.

『As long as you remember him, the First will be delighted. More importantly, it looks like you've become just a little more decent of a man as of late.』

"Just a little, is it?"

As always, his evaluations are harsh. I smiled.

It's just that in my inner most thoughts, I did agree with him. Of all things, his evaluation of me was likely higher than my own.

『Right, just a little. But you definitely are maturing. The First's actions weren't a waste. Be relieved.』

Meaning the ancestors wouldn't forgive it if I continued to be

indecisive after the First left.

“… Even now, I have no idea what it is I should aim for. I mean, Aria was left to me, and I plan to look out for her one way or another. We’ll surely part someday, but I’ll make sure she can stand on her own feet before that.”

『Oh? Were you not opposed to Novem’s harem plan? Even when it was something you should have been overjoyed with as a man… well, it’s not like I don’t get where you’re coming from.』

Truly, if you’re a man, then dreaming of harems is natural.

But if you asked me if I really want one, the answer is vague.

I’m suspicious of whether or not I can even bring happiness to Novem alone.

She had sold are the furnishings prepared for her wedding to raise funds for me.

When will I ever be able to repay such a debt?

“For now, we’ll just see the world as adventurers. And while we’re doing that, the answer may come up… There are just too many things I know nothing about.”

As I said that, the Third agreed.

『Humans have nothing but unknowns. Even if they act like they know everything, that’s surely a lie. That’s why there’s no way but to spend your whole life learning it. There’s plenty of wisdom you won’t find in a book, and I agree with your opinion, Lyle.』

“Thank you, Third Generation.”

There, the Third cautioned me.

『Whoops, looks like we talked too much. The princess is waking up, so let’s bring the conversation to a close here.』

The Third closed his mouth, and Aria woke up.

She raised the upper half of her body, and the the red gem dangling

from her neck looked as if it were letting off light.

She called out.

“… You were still awake?”

She looked quite sleepy, but her form was also quite defenseless. She rubbed her eyes, and looked in my direction.

While thinking it would be nice if she looked at me as more of a man, I looked back, and saw there was no helping it given the person I was anyways.

She left the bed, and drew near me.

And she turned to the pendant on my neck.

“You have a number of Skills too, right? As I thought, is that an heirloom of sorts?”

As she stared at my blue Jewel, I nodded.

Rather than concealing it, it looks like she thought that it was hard for me to use them due to my frail constitution. Even if I had a blue gem hanging from my neck, she didn’t think I could make use of it.

“… It’s something that’s been passed down through the heads of the Walt House. A precious heirloom.”

She lowered herself into a nearby chair, and touched her own red gem.

“I see. Even when I also have one, it’s complicated to use… They were apparently all the rage in the past, but now that the technology to make them has been lost, they’ve fallen out of production. But since they’re heavily unbalanced, they’re not too sought after.”

Magic Tools made their appearance, and the gems that had been used up to that point were soon abandoned.

It was because there was no choice on the Skills in a gem.

It was looked on as merely a device to record the Skills that manifested in people.

I’m not sure if she’s in a good mood or something, but Aria was talking a lot today.

“Fufu.”

“What’s up?”

“I just remembered something. You see, this red gem that’s been passed through the Lockwarde family women, it actually has quite an interesting story behind it.”

“Interesting story.”

As I showed some interest, she began to talk.

It started with a single woman, who married into the House.

“When gems first started spreading, there were only ones without anything recorded on them.”

“… Right.”

The First learned that later, and I remembered him regretting it.

When you look back at the Walt House’s start, it’s just a funny story at this point.

“And my ancestor that married in, you see, she brought it with her. But the Lockwarde House already had one. So they didn’t know why she brought one with her.”

When that woman came in with her red gem, the Lockwarde House already had a gem in their possession.

Since using multiple ones at once would cause problems, the gem stayed with that woman.

“And so, that ancestor made it so that the gem was to be passed down to the Lockwarde Family women. Along with her own story of failure.”

“And that’s interesting?”

“Rather than interesting, perhaps a little tragic? Before she married,

it seems my ancestor had a person she liked. For that person's sake, she paid a large sum, and bought the gem."

Hearing up to that point, it looked like it would turn into a drama.

From the flow of the story, it sounded like her husband, and the person she liked were different people.

"This isn't going to have a punchline, is it?"

As I said that, Aria told me to wait for the end.

"You see, that ancestor was quite bad with words, and she couldn't convey her feelings to that man. What's more, they had never even talked once! She would just occasionally see him from afar, and she was satisfied with that. Don't you think that's foolish?"

On that, I wasn't really sure how to respond.

I do find it off that she never even called out to him, but I guess the First Generation was in a similar situation.

"… Well, it is a bit questionable."

"Right! And so a few years passed without her being able to hand it over, talks of marriage came, and she wasn't able to refuse. So all she brought with her was the red gem she bought for that man. Even when she heard that the man wanted a red gem, she was never even able to talk to him."

A small question popped up in my head.

I was a little curious about the man that woman had fallen for.

"What sort of person was the man?"

"I don't know the specifics, but it seems there were a lot of youths who rushed out to reclaim land. It seems that man headed a pioneering corps, and went far away from the capital. When my ancestor heard that, she bought this to at least be able to convey her feelings in the end, but she was never able to hand it over. She's too hopeless, isn't she?"

Could it be? I thought, so I decided to ask.

While there should be plenty of men out there who fit the description, I couldn't stand by without confirming it.

"D-do you know that person's name? Perhaps appearance!"

As I drew closer, Aria seemed surprised.

"Appearance is beyond me… if it's his name, then…"

She probably never thought I would show this much interest. Aria seemed a little perplexed.

And with a gesture as if to try remembering, she voiced the name.

"I believe it was Ballze or【Basil】or something like that. He was the third son of a Knight House, and it was love across rank, it seems. I mean, it looks like my ancestor was the daughter of the baron at the time, and perhaps even if she called out to him, nothing would come of it. Her name was【Alice】."

"I… see…"

It looks like her feelings did go through.

I found myself unsure of what to say.

If only one of them had called out… but if that happened, then neither me nor Aria would be born.

Having heard the story, the Ancestors let out their impressions.

The Second was blunt.

『They're both idiots.』

The Third as well…

『How should I put this, perhaps it really was『Fate』. He never had the opportunity to hear it to the end… how should I put this, if you ask if it's fitting, I guess it is fitting of the First.』

The Fourth was a little regretful.

『While I do feel it's a little sad, I'm a bit envious.』

The Fifth was cold.

『Well, it wasn't fated to be. If it was, they'd have ended up together.』

The Sixth…

『Even if love across status comes to fruition, whether that will bring happiness or not is…』

The Seventh was similar to the Sixth. But slightly different.

『It all depends on the circumstances. If that woman called Alice had many sisters, perhaps she would have been allowed to chase after the First on his journey. They had just gotten themselves out of an era of chaos, and it probably wasn't a time so set in ranks as ours. If he was to become independent, then marrying wouldn't have been too bad of an option.』

Imperial Nobles, unlike provincial Nobles, didn't command too much military force.

They lived by receiving money from the palace.

I can't say which is better, but in a position like that, it would be important for them to have connections with the provincial Nobles as well.

(So there really was a chance for them to be together… truly, perhaps my meeting with Aria really was fate, Founder.)

As I was thinking about such things, Aria called out.

"What's wrong? Suddenly making such a sad face… while it may be sad, it's a cautionary tale for the Lockwarde House's women. Make sure you get your feelings across clearly, is the moral. But there's also an official stance. Do that in order to be a warrior woman, they say. It's just that, these sorts of womanly worries have an underside to them… isn't it strange?"

"… Haha, the gap really is large."

I thought it would have been better if only she brought it up earlier,

but I realized that nothing could be done even if she did.

It's something that already passed long ago.

Seeing me act differently than usual, she brought forth a question.

"Are you really alright? You've been acting a little strange for a while."

"No, I was just thinking of how fate really exists."

"Fate?"

She was making a puzzled face, so I continued.

"You see, my family, the Walt House's founder… his name was Basil Walt. In order to reach the side of the woman he liked, he went off to become a feudal lord."

Hearing that, Aria opened her eyes wide.

"Eh, do you mean…"

"It looks like neither of them were able to call out. It's just that, it he gained himself some land, and was doing his best in preparation to confess to her."

The story of a man who, for the sake of a single woman, joined a dangerous corps, and cut down the monster-infested forests.

"When he finally returned, the girl he loved had already been married, it seems. Her name was Alice-san."

Having heard that, Aria looked like she was grasping for words.

And after a while, she opened her mouth.

"I wonder what it is. I'm simply not sure what it is I should say. But if fate really does exist somewhere out there, then perhaps the fact that we met is also some sort of destiny."

As she said that with a bitter smile, I nodded.

"That would be nice."

I removed my gaze from Aria, and looked up at the moon.

Looking at that round moon, I thought if only I could bring this story to the First Generation… and found my incessantly mulling self to be a little pitiful.

I shook off the feelings, and looked at nothing but the moon.

The words came out naturally.

“The moon sure is beautiful tonight.”

For some reason, Aria’s face was flushed a little.

The Fourth spoke.

『The bastard did it. He unconsciously did it!!』

The Fifth raised a questioning voice.

『What is it? You’re being loud. What’s so strange about the moon being beautiful?』

The Second was the same.

『Yes, today’s moon really is shining nicely.』

It seems that the Fourth was pissed off, looking at us.

『Why don’t any of you notice it! Lyle, you like books, right? Haven’t you ever read of something like this? Never!?』

While thinking he was being noisy, I said I was going to sleep, and headed for the bed.

(No, what’s so wrong about the moon being beautiful? I mean it is, isn’t it?)

But this time, Aria started gazing up at the moon.

(So she wanted to look at it to? No, I guess that’s fine… I’m going to sleep.)

“I’ll be off to sleep first. Good night.”

Without meeting my eyes, she muttered in a small voice.

“G-good ni…”

Question Corner

Q: So Lyle was at Level 1?

A: Lyle (ヽ´ω`) : "… That's right. For me to have been constantly drained of Mana in that state and surviving, I'd like to praise myself. Ah, please make sure to forget my black history."

Q: What is Novem's objective?

A: Second Generation (゜д゜) : "Novem is a good girl without any ulterior motives, dammit!!"

Fifth Generation(´▪ω▪`) : "Calm down. It's actually scarier if she did all that on love without another motive (I don't believe she's a yandere. I pray to god she's not…)"

Q: Does Growth come when you wake up in the morning?

A: Fourth Generation (-@∀@) : "There are cases like that. Especially at times when you suddenly get a large amount of experience at once, the body cannot process it, and you're stricken with a severe tired feeling. However, even if you're going through life as normal, you can undergo the sudden sensation of opening your eyes. It's something I've experienced. So it's not certain that it'll always happen like Lyle, where he makes some black history for himself first thing in the morning."

Q: I'm pretty sure there was something between this 'sis' and the Second Generation Head. The Second Generation just didn't notice it.

A: Second Generation ΣΣ(゜Д゜;) : "No, while I did become acquainted with her through our family's relations, there was quite an

age difference between us! The one with an age close to hers' was the Third. But I'm the one who prepared a bride for him, so…"

Third Generation↖(´ー`)↗ : "If the Second didn't frantically prepare a wife for me, it may have turned out like that. She sure was a pretty person."

Q: About Novem's and Celes' Skills.

A: Sixth Generation (´・∀・`): "That area is something to wait for expectantly."

Q: Could it be that Celes actually likes Lyle? Or she's perhaps a reincarnator or body swapped?

A: Seventh Generation (´・ω・`) : "I think I've said this before, but she isn't a reincarnator or body swapper or anything. If you're asking whether she likes or hates Lyle, I think it's hate. Or perhaps she's uninterested? I think she was quite happy when Lyle finally left the mansion she lived in."

Q: Zelphy-san is too much of a failure as an advisor.

A: Second Generation（ ・∀・): "We received quite a few questions on that one. First, her being connected to the lord, and relaying information to him dropped the credibility of the guild, was it? If I was to give a reason for this, while she was an adventurer, Zelphy is a resident of Dalien, and I think it's natural to report things to the Lord. I mean, if something happened there's a chance the residents of her homeland would be put at a disadvantage. And wait, the guild is generally a management institution for hopeless ruffians, and an organization to collect magic stones. It isn't as noble a place as you may imagine."

Third Generation (´∀`) : "There were also some questions about the lord's relation to the guild. To continue explanations, the guild

was well aware that Zelphy was related to the lord. In Sevens, the relation of the guild to its feudal lord changes based on the territory. They agree over whatever works best, and lash out at each other over whatever clashed, right? And wait, I think there's a problem in a feudal lord that isn't mindful of the massive organization crawling onto their doorstep."

Fourth Generation (-@∀@): "There were some comments on how she took money, but that was the expenses to teach adventurers the basics. The bandit subjugation and the urgent request participation were separate fees. Lyle's low evaluation in Dalien was intentional on his side, so I doubt Zelphy knew what he was thinking most of the time."

Fifth (゜Д゜) : "In the end, she's no good in some areas, but they learned the fundamentals of adventuring, so there isn't really a problem. Lyle was able to gain knowledge and experience not even we possessed, so I think it's fine for him to have paid for it. It's just that I'll never forgive her for teaching him how to kill and skin a horned rabbit. Never, you hear!?"

Q: About the missing party and the deceased adventurer, how did the guild know about that?

A: Seventh Generation（ ･∀･): "… There was an explanation of this in part one, and at the start of the mess, there was a scene where Hawkins confirmed it, but was it hard to understand? Guild cards are made in pairs, and one is kept by the guild. Using that, if something is carved over the name in the guild card, then that's an assurance of death. People fill out where they're headed at the guild receptionist desk, and if you haven't returned by your appointed time, and a mark appears on the card… you get it, right?"

Q: For it to have eight Skills in it, is it really an heirloom?

A: Sixth Generation（ ゜д゜）: "… Don't be doubting that part. Even like this, it's a bonifide heirloom that was handed down through the

Walt Family.”

Lyle（ ´･ω･`）: (Even if I tried selling it, I doubt I would get too much. Even the rare metal from the ornaments around it is worth more.)

Q: Quite a few of the ancestors refer to themselves in the same way, so in order to differentiate characters, how about changing that?

A: Lyle (´;ω ;`) : “Thank you for the useful opinion. If there’s a good place for that, I may end up changing it.”

Notes

- They mostly use ‘ore’ but this is lost in translation, nor is it too important if you can already differentiate characters.)

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